ANTIOPE

A tragedy in English verse,
with Notes & Commentary in English.

by Chris A. Tsirkas

An attempted reconstruction of Euripides' "Antiope",
based on the surviving fragments of the play, and with additional dramaturgy.

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- Discussions on the Commentary and on the Analysis of this tragedy —both of which are provided at the end of each Scene and on the Entrance Ode.

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Table of Contents

Copyright information 1
Preface 4
Dramatis Personae 15
Prologue 17
Entrance Choral Ode 22
1st Scene 25
1st Choral Ode 32
2nd Scene 34
2nd Choral Ode 42
3rd Scene 44
3rd Choral Ode 53
4th Scene 55
4th Choral Ode 62
5th Scene 63
Chorus' Exit Ode 75
"*Antiope*" as a rock opera 78
Main Bibliography 79
About the author 84

Preface

Cadmus, a Phoenician prince from the city of Sidon, had become the legendary founder of an ancient city in the region of Boeotia in ancient, pre-Homeric Greece, after having been guided by an oracle to follow a cow and to establish a city where the cow lay down. This city became “Thèbes”, eventually known for its seven-gated walls and its rich mythological history. Cadmus's marriage to Harmonia, the daughter of Ares and Aphrodite, produced a line of descendants plagued by misfortune and divine retribution, due to the hybris of Cadmus to boast about marrying Ares’ daughter in a ceremony more splendid than the banquets of the gods of Olympus.

In the broader ancient region of Boeotia, there lived Antiope, the daughter of Nycteus, a Boeotian hero. Antiope was renowned for her beauty and grace. Nycteus and his brother, Lycus, were force to flee to the city of Thèbes, after having been accused for murder. Nycteus was appointed to the royal Guard by the king Pentheus, grandson of Cadmus. Nycteus's bother, Lycus, eventually became the king-regent of Thèbes, after the death of King Pentheus (refer to Euripide's "*Bacchae*"), since the offspring of the latter was not of age to assume kingship.

Antiope’s hardships begin after she becomes impregnated by the god Zeus. Due to the shame of her father and the public outcry, she was forced to leave the city of Thèbes. She fled to the nearby city of Sicyon, where she met and married the king, Epopéus, who fell in love with her. The course of the events were soon driven by the wrath of her uncle, Lycus, who coveted power and saw in Antiope a threat to his dominion, as the daughter of his brother. Lycus, at that time the ruler of Thèbes, was relentless in his pursuit: eventually attacking Sicyon, overpowering Epopéus, and taking Antiope captive —after his late brother, Nycteus, who had in the meantime died from his shame, had asked him to bring his daughter back to Thèbes. From that moment, the life of Antiope was marked by suffering and despair.

As Antiope was being carried from Sicyon to Thèbes in captivity, she was about to give birth. On the slopes of Mount Cithaeron, in the midst of her journey and under dire conditions, she gave birth to twin sons, Amphion and Zethus. Lycus entrusted her newborns to the mercy of the wilderness, being certain that they would not survive. However, the twins were found and raised by a kindly herdsman, who was unaware of their noble lineage.

Lycus's wife, Dirce, a woman of fierce jealousy and cruelty, became Antiope's tormentor upon her arrival in Thèbes. Bound and imprisoned, Antiope endured endless humiliation and pain at the hands of Dirce, who saw her as a rival and as a symbol of her husband's infidelity. Antiope's suffering continued unabated; her spirit unbroken, even as the years of captivity wore on.

As this Tragedy begins, Antiope, aided by the god Dionysus, finally escapes from Dirce's clutches. With her bonds broken, she returns to the cave on Mount Cithaeron, desperate to find any trace of her long-lost sons. It is here that her story intersects with fate, setting the stage for a tale of recognition, vengeance, and the reclaiming of her rightful place. As this Tragedy unfolds, past sorrows meet present hopes, and the threads of destiny weave a tapestry of love, justice, and retribution.

Antiope's lineage ties her to the intricate web of Theban mythology, marked by divine interventions and curses. Despite not being a direct descendant of Cadmus, Antiope's story is influenced by the curse that plagues the House of Cadmus. This curse, originating from Cadmus's hybris, casts a long shadow over Thèbes and all of its rulers. This divine disfavor sets the stage for the ensuing tragedy, as Antiope's capture by Lycus and her torment by his wife, Dirce, are framed within the broader context of the cursed lineage of the city's royal House.

"*Antiope*" weaves a narrative which attempts to capture the essence of Attic Tragedy, by encapsulating themes of justice, vengeance, identity, and the transformative power of art. Through its plot and the development of the characters, this tragedy aims to provide a profound exploration of human suffering and of the quest for redemption, against the backdrop of divine intervention and of mortal frailty.

Plot Summary (*spoilers ahead*)

The tragedy begins with a prologue by Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, who sets the stage by revealing to a herdsman the true identities of the two boys the herdsman has raised —Zethus and Amphion, the long-lost sons of Antiope. This revelation anchors the unfolding drama, as Antiope —aided by Dionysus— escapes from her tormentor, Dirce, and returns to the cave where she had given birth to her sons.

Unaware of their true lineage, Zethus and Amphion are initially skeptical of Antiope's tale, leading to a series of misunderstandings and confrontations. As Antiope recounts her noble heritage, her capture by Lycus, and her suffering at the hands of Dirce, the brothers remain conflicted, torn between their sense of duty and the emerging truth of their mother's identity.

Dirce, unaware of Antiope's presence, arrives with her Bacchants to honor Dionysus. She mistakes Zethus and Amphion for servants and engages in a heated debate with them about the nature of freedom and justice. This argument reveals the brothers' disdain for tyranny and their longing for a more just society.

As the Bacchants dance and sing in praise of Dionysus, they discover Antiope hiding. Dirce, recognizing her, threatens her with death. However, the herdsman intervenes just in time, revealing to Zethus and Amphion their true identities and Antiope's story. This revelation leads to an emotional reunion, but also incites the brothers' rage against Dirce.

Driven by a desire for vengeance and justice, Amphion and Zethus execute Dirce in a manner befitting her cruelty. The act of retribution is swift and brutal, underscoring the themes of justice and vengeance that permeate the tragedy. However, their victory is short-lived, as they learn that Lycus is approaching with his guards.

The brothers, along with Antiope and their allies, prepare an ambush to confront Lycus. Lycus arrives and falls into the ambush. Overpowered, he pleads for his life; however, the brothers, driven by their quest for justice, are unmoved. Just as they are about to deliver the final blow, Hermes intervenes, sparing Lycus's life but exiling him from Thèbes for his past sins . He decrees

that Amphion and Zethus shall rule Thèbes until the rightful heir is of age, but warns of the lingering curse on the house of Cadmus.

The tragedy culminates with Dionysus lamenting the death of Dirce, honoring her contributions to his worship, and decreeing a harsh fate for Antiope. Despite the brothers' pleas, Dionysus insists on fulfilling the divine punishment, leaving Antiope in despair. The play concludes with the construction of Thèbes' legendary seven-gated walls, symbolizing both the city's enduring strength and the complex interplay of justice, vengeance, and divine will.

In this retelling, the themes of justice, vengeance, divine intervention, and the human condition are intricately woven, offering a timeless reflection on the struggles and on the triumphs that define us all.

Central Themes and Motifs

One of the central themes of this tragedy is the delicate balance between justice and vengeance. Amphion and Zethus' execution of Dirce and their ambush of Lycus are portrayed as acts of retribution for the injustices suffered by their mother, Antiope. However, these actions also raise moral questions about the nature of justice when driven by a desire for revenge. The ancient Greek concept of "*aftodikía*" («*αὐτοδικία*» = self-help or private revenge) is explored, reflecting the pre-Homeric tradition where individuals often took justice into their own hands, a practice that often led to cycles of violence and retribution.

The tragedy delves deeper into issues of identity and recognition. What forms the emotional core of the narrative is Antiope's struggle to reunite with her sons as well as their eventual recognition of her as their mother. This recognition scene, a staple of Greek tragedy, underscores the themes of lost-and-found familial bonds and of the enduring power of blood ties.

Amphion's lyre, which has the magical ability to move stones and build the walls of Thèbes, symbolizes the transformative power of art and culture. This motif suggests that true strength and resilience come from the harmony of physical labor and artistic expression, reflecting the importance of balance in a well-rounded society.

The presence of gods such as Dionysus and Hermes highlights the interplay between divine will and human action. While the gods guide and influence the events, the mortal characters must navigate their own paths, often facing dire consequences. This interplay underscores the ancient Greek belief in fate and the limited agency of humans within the divine order.

The curse that haunts the House of Cadmus, and subsequently the royal throne of Thèbes, serves as a backdrop to the tragedy, influencing the characters' fates. This curse, originating from Cadmus's actions and passed down through generations, illustrates the inescapable nature of familial mortal guilt and the relentless grip of past sins on the present.

Character Analysis

Antiope:

Antiope is the tragic heroine whose life of suffering and endurance epitomizes the human condition in Greek tragedy. Her noble lineage and unjust treatment evoke sympathy and highlight the themes of innocence wronged and of the quest for justice. Despite the numerous hardships she faces, including being captured and tormented by Dirce, Antiope remains resilient. Her strength is evident in her ability to endure prolonged suffering and still hold on to hope for reuniting with her sons.

Antiope's noble lineage is reflected in her demeanor and actions. She shows compassion and a deep sense of justice, especially in her initial refusal to participate in Dirce's execution, highlighting her moral integrity. Her love for her sons is a driving force throughout the tragedy. The memory of her children and the hope of reuniting with them provide her with the strength to survive her ordeals. Antiope also processed a stoicism, which is evident in her acceptance of her fate and her suffering.

She embodies the Greek ideal of enduring pain and misfortune with dignity and with grace. Antiope's character embodies the themes of innocence wronged and the quest for justice. Her unjust treatment evokes sympathy and serves as a critique of the capricious nature of fate and of the cruelty of human actions. Through her suffering, the play explores the human condition and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity. Throughout this tragedy, Antiope transitions from a victim of circumstances to a figure of moral strength and justice. Her eventual reunion with her sons and the justice meted out to Dirce and to Lycus highlight the themes of redemption and of the eventual triumph of good over evil.

Zethus and Amphion:

The twin brothers, Zethus and Amphion, are pivotal to the narrative. They are the sons of Antiope, raised by a herdsman unaware of their noble lineage. They symbolize the dual aspects of human nature and the balance needed in a just society. The twin brothers represent the dual aspects of human nature —Zethus, the practical and labor-focused, and Amphion, the artistic and contemplative. Their debate about the value of art versus labor reflects broader societal questions about the role of culture in civilization.

Zethus values hard work, practicality, and the tangible benefits of labor. He believes in the importance of contributing to society through physical toil and in the virtues of a disciplined, industrious life. He is depicted as strong and resolute, having a clear sense of duty and justice. He is quick to action, and prioritizes practical solutions over philosophical musings.

In contrast to his brother, Amphion values the arts and the intangible benefits they bring to society. He believes in the power of music and culture to elevate the human spirit and bring harmony. He is more introspective and sensitive, often contemplating the deeper meanings of life and the importance of beauty and creativity.

The dynamic between Zethus and Amphion represents the broader societal debate about the

roles of art and labor. Their contrasting views on what holds the greatest significance in life reflect the tension between practical, everyday contributions and the higher pursuits of culture and philosophy. Together, they embody the need for balance between these aspects for a harmonious and just society. The brothers' journey from ignorance of their origins to the discovery of their true heritage and their role in avenging their mother's suffering is central to the tragedy. Their development highlights the themes of identity, of justice, and of the reconciliation of opposing values. Their eventual unity in purpose underscores the importance of balance between practical and artistic pursuits.

By delving deeper into the characters of Antiope, Zethus, and Amphion, we gain a richer understanding of the themes and moral questions that drive the tragedy. These characters, with their complex traits and significant arcs, bring to life the timeless struggles and to the triumphs of the human condition.

Herdsman:

The herdsman serves as a pivotal figure in the narrative, bridging the gap between the divine will and human actions. His role underscores the themes of fate, of destiny, and the of intricate interplay between human lives and the will of the gods. His nurturing of Zethus and Amphion allows them to grow into the strong and capable individuals who will eventually reclaim their rightful place and bring justice to Thèbes.

Throughout this tragedy, the herdsman transitions from a simple caretaker to a key player in the revelation of truth and in the fulfillment of destiny. His actions catalyze the recognition scene between Antiope and her sons, setting the stage for the subsequent events which lead to the downfall of Dirce and Lycus, and to the restoration of justice. By exploring the herdsman's character, this tragedy highlights the importance of seemingly minor figures in the grand tapestry of fate and destiny, illustrating how the actions of one individual can have profound implications for the lives of many.

Dirce:

Dirce is the primary antagonist in this tragedy, representing the force of oppression against which Antiope struggles. She is the wife of Lycus and the one who inflicts the most direct suffering upon Antiope. Dirce’s actions are driven by intense jealousy and cruelty. She sees Antiope as a rival, and punishes her out of spite —embodying the destructive power of unchecked malice. Dirce’s relentless persecution of Antiope highlights her unforgiving nature.

She is relentless in her efforts to maintain control and to assert her dominance over Antiope. Dirce manipulates those around her, including her husband Lycus, to achieve her ends. Her vindictive nature leads her to take extreme measures to torment Antiope. Dirce represents the darker aspects of human nature: jealousy, cruelty, and the desire for control.

Her character serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of letting such traits go unchecked. Her eventual downfall illustrates the inevitability of retributive justice and the moral that those who inflict suffering will ultimately face consequences. Dirce’s arc is one of a powerful

figure brought low by her own actions. Her cruelty leads to her brutal end at the hands of Amphion and Zethus, mirroring the violence she inflicted upon others. This retribution is not only personal but also symbolic of the larger cosmic justice that governs human actions in Greek tragedy. Through Dirce, the play explores the theme of justice and the moral order of the universe.

Lycus:

Lycus, though initially a figure of authority and power, becomes a tragic figure himself, caught in the web of divine and mortal retribution. He is initially presented as a figure of authority and power, ruling over Thèbes. He is responsible for capturing Antiope and bringing her back to Thèbes, thus setting the stage for her suffering under Dirce. Lycus wields significant power as the ruler of Thèbes. His authority is a central element of his character, and he uses it to enforce his will.

His actions are driven by ambition and a sense of hubris. He sees Antiope as a threat to his power and takes drastic measures to secure his position. Despite his initial portrayal as a powerful ruler, Lycus becomes a tragic figure. His ultimate fate is a result of both divine and mortal retribution, showing his vulnerability and the fallibility of human power. Lycus embodies the theme of hubris —excessive pride and ambition that leads to downfall. His character underscores the fallibility of human power and the limitations of mortal authority in the face of divine will.

Lycus's fate serves as a reminder of the dangers of overreaching and the eventual consequences of such actions. Lycus's arc moves from authority and power to defeat and exile. His relentless pursuit of Antiope and his complicity in her suffering lead to his ultimate downfall. Despite his initial reluctance, he becomes ensnared in the web of divine retribution, emphasizing the inescapable nature of fate in Greek tragedy. Lycus's punishment —exile and the loss of his throne— highlights the themes of justice, of retribution, and of the limits of human power.

Dionysus:

Dionysus, the god of wine, revelry and fertility, plays a pivotal role in the narrative. His intervention frees Antiope from her bonds, setting the stage for the unfolding drama. Dionysus's presence in the tragedy underscores the themes of divine justice and the duality of liberation and punishment. Dionysus is portrayed as both a liberator and an avenger. He frees Antiope from her captivity, representing the liberating aspect of his nature. However, he also demands retribution for Dirce's death, embodying his role as an avenger.

His character is multifaceted, reflecting his complex role in Greek mythology. He is associated with joy, ecstasy, and the breakdown of societal norms, but also with divine madness, punishment, and divine retribution. His actions are often mysterious and unpredictable, reflecting the undecipherable nature of the gods. His motivations and decisions drive the plot forward, creating both liberation and conflict. Dionysus embodies the dual nature of divine intervention in human affairs. His role as a liberator highlights the potential for freedom and joy, while his vengeful actions emphasize the inescapable nature of divine justice.

Dionysus's intervention in the tragedy serves as a reminder of the gods' power and their ability

to shape human destiny. Throughout the tragedy, his actions have profound effects on the mortal characters. His liberation of Antiope sets the narrative in motion, while his demand for retribution for Dirce's death adds a layer of complexity to the themes of justice and vengeance. Dionysus's presence and decisions underscore the interplay between divine will and human action, highlighting the inherent tensions and dualities in Greek mythology.

Hermes:

Hermes, the messenger of the gods, serves as a divine arbiter and mediator in the narrative. His intervention at a crucial moment in the tragedy brings a sense of divine justice and order, halting the cycle of vengeance and bloodshed. He is primarily portrayed as a messenger and mediator, conveying the will of Zeus to the mortal characters. His role as an intermediary between the divine and mortal realms is central to his character.

He embodies wisdom and justice, often intervening to ensure that divine justice is tempered with mercy. His actions reflect a balanced approach to justice, preventing excessive retribution and maintaining cosmic order. His demeanor is calm and composed, in contrast to the more volatile and passionate mortal characters. His presence brings a sense of stability and clarity to the unfolding drama. Hermes's role in the tragedy highlights the themes of divine justice and intervention.

As the messenger of Zeus, he ensures that the actions of the mortal characters align with the will of the gods. His intervention serves to temper the cycle of vengeance, emphasizing the importance of wisdom and mercy in the administration of justice. His arc is less about personal development and more about his function as a divine agent. His timely intervention prevents further bloodshed and establishes a sense of divine order. By appointing Amphion and Zethus as the rulers of Thèbes, Hermes ensures that justice is served while also addressing the lingering curse on the House of Cadmus and on the royal throne of Thèbes. His actions underscore the themes of balance, of order, and the role of the gods in guiding human destiny.

Together, Dionysus and Hermes play crucial roles in the tragedy, highlighting the themes of divine justice, intervention, and the complex relationship between mortals and the gods. Their actions and decisions drive the narrative forward, by creating a rich tapestry of liberation, vengeance, and of cosmic order.

On the Aesthetics and on the Perception of Attic Tragedy

In ancient Attic Tragedy, the human soul most often purifies its suffering through the love of nature and through a longing for the sweetness of life, expressed with a nobility of language which is both anthropocentric and evocative. Even the act of death becomes, in this manner, an act of supreme theatrical completion and harmony. The protagonist's soul, aspiring upwards —following the principle of "nothing in excess"— avoids excessive passion and extreme suffering. Instead, the insatiable desire for the beauty of life balances with suffering and lamentation, in such a way that neither the natural nor the moral essence of the sufferer is deformed by expressive or verbal excess. Even when a hero accepts their position and fate in the face of the

unyielding law of Necessity —or, more so, when faced with the specter of inevitable death— the depiction of physical and mental pain on the actor's face and body is devoid of exaggeration, avoiding bodily or mental distortion and excessive audience pity or compassion through martyrdom. Excessive endurance is also avoided, as it would provoke undue admiration and paralyze the compassion. For, though the compassion needs the protagonist's suffering and the audience's compassion to be mobilized, it must be ignited by a soul which always moves within the standards of measure and harmony, uplifting towards light and the joys of life, and never with bitterness or base feelings of self-abasement or unjust vengefulness. Thus, in Attic Tragedy, Endurance is not an independent and self-generated virtue, but is usually driven by higher feelings such as faith and devotion, intensifying the audience's admiration.

This reverence in the depiction of pain in ancient Attic Tragedy follows the same moral and physical —expressive— moderation and the nature-worshipping/ideal-worshipping nobility which are observed in other ancient Greek arts, such as poetry and painting. It strives to clearly demonstrate and to imprint on the audience's soul the idea of the worship of beauty, which was an unwavering pillar of ancient Greek worldview. With the belief that the Greek individual ceases to be a coherent being and becomes formless when overwhelmed by excessive passion (or any other excess), many instances in Mythology and Tragedy prefer the "miracle" (e.g., the hero's transformation) over physical or mental deformation (through excessive language, expressions, or kinesiology) and over moral degradation in the face of inescapable pain. Thus, ancient art avoids unnecessary and excessive realism, in order to avoid interpreting the enigmatic human soul in a manner which would tire the viewer, thus reducing the message reception of the theatrical act. Instead, it chooses to engage the viewer's creative imagination, by using techniques of reactive imagery —after having previously stimulated the viewer’s rational filters during the performance, by encouraging the audience to perceive the hero's mental and emotional state in theatrical time both within and outside the theatrical action.

Therefore, one of the fundamental pillars of Attic Tragedy is the subjugation of material nature to moral order, in such a way that any moral order (e.g., the social morality of the historical era in which the drama unfolds, the moral code embedded in the drama from the time it is taught, or the protagonist's personal ethics) does not quell passions but balances them; sustaining them, unquenched but gentle —or, more correctly, creating an apparently dangerous and fragile but equally harmonious balance of opposites between moral and physical passions on one hand and the psychologically soothing effect of love for life, nature, the eternal, the beautiful, the great, and the true on the other. This subjugation of material nature to moral order also implies that, in no case —within theatrical terms— can moral and emotional passions be excessively embodied beyond measure. The kinesthetic impact of the protagonist's physical passions on the viewer's feelings must not surpass the emotional impact of the protagonist’s moral passions on the latter; such an occurrence would mean that the fear for the actor's physical integrity or the fear of death would silence the trembling of the actor’s soul, thus negatively affecting the sensitive and precise mechanism of eliciting compassion. Additionally, a secondary subjugation of moral order to the protagonist's moral strength occurs during the evocation of passions, reinforcing the protagonist's spirit to contend with the pressure of the unexpected, the imposed, and the inevitable; often in cases where the human law is presented mainly as an authoritative royal or priestly command or as Necessity herself disguised as an unwritten, divine law.

With this mechanism —which is an extension of the Greek worldview in the classical era, the expression of material and physical passions is counterbalanced by emotional pain; additionally, the emotional pain is equally expressed with the love for life; the combination of the balanced expression of the physical and of the emotional pain forms the springboards for manifesting the noblest, the most ideal, the strongest, and the most noble emotions of the human soul. These emotions are called to be not only a shield against pain, but also the generative forces of endurance on one hand and of the protagonist's and audience's character's conscious evolution on the other. Fundamental pillars of this mechanism are the expressive simplicity (without verbal acrobatics or unnecessary periphrases, and with clarity) and the swift action (without contrived expressive, kinesiology, or —alas!— directorial acrobatics). Thus, the balance between the protagonist's physical and moral passions, without excess in the portrayal and in the expression of neither natural nor emotional pain, and without materializing emotional passions —but with a moderate expression of pain contrasting with the expressed love for life—, constitutes the dramatic beauty. The protagonist's balanced emotions, far from any passive stoicism on one hand and far from extreme excess on the other, in relation to the causes that provoke them, move the audience's compassion. The pure, intangible, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of moral passions combat and counterbalance the earthly nature and the intensity of the physical passions —the medium being the subjugation of material order to moral order, and the expressive lever being the glorification of beauty—, thus provoking Aristotle's "catharsis." The feedback function of the protagonists' inner beauty with the imaged (physically, emotionally, and morally) balance of their passions and with the viewers' emotional state; the creative dialectic of love between the unattainable ideal and its personified form; the internal and inherent power of transcendence which fights an unequal and relentless battle against the Necessity; the brutal realization of the unique and fleeting nature of time (today, we might call it "sense of quantization"), which determines life based on unfree choices —sometimes falsely perceived as "freedom", so as to maintain the "Ego's" integrity; these define, for me, the fundamental components of ancient Attic Tragedy.

In ancient Attic Tragedy, "catharsis" represents the relief of the audience's feelings of pity, compassion and fear, the restoration of any "moral or emotional damage" they might have suffered during the drama due to the protagonists' passions, the elevation of their psyche to the divine sphere (most often through the choral parts), and the subsequent (usually outside the dramatic time) exercise of their intellect based on the epistemological teachings of the drama. I dare say that the emotional burden through the mechanism of the Aristotelic “compassion” and the fear serve merely as the humble yet refined means of the playwright to —through emotional upheaval— stimulate the mechanisms of logical analysis in the viewer. In this way, the viewer, having impressed intense images from their emotional trial, revisits them repeatedly, so that their emotions become the springboard for epistemological inquiry and self-exploration. In this sense, we might say that Attic Tragedy is a precursor to the use of therapeutic imagery techniques, both for psychological soothing and for self-improvement (and, not infrequently, for propaganda).

By this method and technique, one of the primary goals of Attic tragedy is for the citizen to realize their responsibilities and position towards themselves, their household, their city, and the cosmos. “Catharsis” serves as the means —not the end— in a dual process of psychological and epistemological —primarily epistemological— self-reformation of the viewer towards their better

self. In order to facilitate “catharsis”, the teaching of the drama in ancient times usually took place in the natural setting of the ancient theater (usually with views of natural beauty, often corresponding to the "scenery" of the given tragedy) and within the enclosed, hierarchically organized, and "safe" world of a fictional act —one that was distant from the chaos, hardships, and problems of daily life; so that the process of watching and the reception of the onstage events could occur undistracted.

Closing thoughts

Ancient Greek Tragedy often draws deeply from mythology, in order to explore complex human emotions and divine interactions, at the same time serving as a mirror to the societal values and to existential questions of the time for which it is being composed. In this play, Mythology provides the foundation for the narrative, intertwining the fates of gods and mortals in a poignant drama which reflects the themes of justice, vengeance, and redemption. The characters, such as Antiope, Zethus, and Amphion, are rooted in mythological lore, which enhances the audience's understanding of their struggles and of the divine influences at play. Through these mythological figures, this tragedy delves into the timeless questions of human suffering and the pursuit of justice, illustrating how the ancient Greeks of the classical age viewed the world and their place within it.

The use of Mythology in this play not only grounds the story in a familiar cultural context, but also aims to elevate its significance by connecting the characters' personal plights to larger, universal themes. For instance, the intervention of gods like Dionysus and Hermes highlights the belief of ancient Greeks in divine justice and in the inevitable consequences of human actions. The myth of Cadmus and the curse on his lineage and on the throne of Thèbes adds a layer of inevitability and tragic fate, underscoring the ancient Greek notion that mortals are often at the mercy of forces beyond their control. By weaving mythological elements into the narrative, this play invites the audience to reflect on the timeless moral and ethical dilemmas faced by the characters, making the ancient myths relevant to contemporary discussions about justice, power, and the human condition.

"*Antiope*" intertwines themes of justice, identity, and the power of art —within a framework of divine intervention and mortal struggle. Its exploration of ancient concepts like "*aftodikía*" and the curse of the House of Cadmus provides a rich tapestry of moral and philosophical questions which resonate through the ages. This tragedy not only aims to entertain, but it also invites deep reflection on the nature of justice, on the power of familial bonds, and on the enduring influence of art and culture in shaping human destiny.

Although this tragedy draws upon and respects the ancient sources recounting the myths surrounding Antiope, Amphion, and Zethus, it is important to note that significant artistic liberties have been taken. The ancient accounts often conflict in their details, and this adaptation strives to create a cohesive and didactic narrative. These modifications serve to enhance the play's educational value and to provide a clearer moral and thematic structure, aligning with the timeless traditions of Attic Tragedy, while addressing contemporary sensibilities and insights.

Verses based on the fragments of Euripides' "*Antiope*" have been used, in positions close to those academically suggested in various scholarly papers regarding possible reconstructions of the dramaturgy of Euripides. These verses have been seamlessly integrated into this play, to enhance its authenticity, and are marked with an asterisk for easy identification. The numbers of these fragments follow Richard Kannicht's numbering system. Since substantial dramaturgical and poetical liberty has been taken, not all of these fragments have been used. The few divergences from and additions to Euripides' original dramaturgy, are clearly marked in the "*Comments*" section, below each Act.

The Choral parts in this play have been reconstructed in a more free, "Shakespearean" style, diverging from Euripides' typical technique of addressing or invoking lesser deities of the ancient Greek Cosmos. This creative choice allows the Chorus to engage in broader reflections on fate, on justice, and on the human condition; thus, providing a more universal and timeless commentary. By adopting this approach, I aim to enhance the dramatic and the poetic impact of the Choral Odes, by making them resonate more profoundly with contemporary audiences —while retaining the essence of the original themes and emotions.

Finally, I have chosen to compose this adaptation in the English language first, in order to reach a broader audience and to make the timeless teachings of Attic tragedy accessible to more people. A Greek translation will follow, likely in the first half of 2025, to honor the original language and the cultural context of the work. By presenting the play in English first, I hope to foster a greater appreciation for the profound insights and for the enduring relevance of ancient Greek drama, among a diverse and global readership.

Dramatis Personae

Dionysus
The god of wine, revelry, and fertility, who frees Antiope from her bonds and reveals the true identity of her sons to the herdsman. Dionysus plays a crucial role in guiding the fate of the characters and ensuring that justice is served.

Herdsman
A simple shepherd who unknowingly raises Antiope's twin sons, Amphion and Zethus, after finding them abandoned in a cave. He is a key figure in the story, eventually revealing the true identity of the boys and aiding in the unfolding events.

Amphion
One of Antiope's twin sons, known for his musical talent and the lyre given to him by Hermes. Amphion's music has the power to move stones and build the walls of Thèbes. He is thoughtful and artistic, often clashing with his brother Zethus over their differing views on life.

Zethus
Antiope's other twin son, known for his physical strength and practical mindset. He believes in leading a virtuous life of service and hard work, often disagreeing with Amphion's more artistic and carefree approach. Together with Amphion, he plays a pivotal role in avenging their mother's suffering.

Antiope
The mother of Amphion and Zethus, who has suffered greatly at the hands of Dirce and Lycus. Freed by Dionysus, she seeks to reunite with her lost sons and find peace. Her journey is one of endurance, strength, and ultimate reunion with her children.

Dirce
The wife of Lycus and a cruel oppressor of Antiope. She seeks to maintain her power and punish Antiope, but ultimately meets a tragic end at the hands of Amphion and Zethus, who avenge their mother's torment. Loved by Dionysus, because she had helped him to establish his worship, after the death of Pentheus (refer to Euripides' "*Bacchae*").

Messenger (2nd herdsman)
A herdsman from Mount Cithaeron who brings crucial news to Antiope, to the 1st herdsman, and to the Chorus about the death of Dirce and the approach of Lycus. His role is to convey important information that propels the plot forward.

Lycus
The king of Thèbes and brother of Nycteus, who captures and torments Antiope. He is a key antagonist in the story, seeking to capture Antiope even after she escapes. His pursuit of power and control ultimately leads to his downfall.

Hermes

The messenger-god and protector of commerce, who bestowed the lyre to Amphion. He appears to ensure that justice is balanced and to assign the future roles of Amphion and Zethus in Thèbes, proclaiming their kingship and the exile of Lycus.

Prologue
DIONYSUS, HERDSMAN

[Evening time. In the background, the entrance of a cave on Mount Cithaeron, near "*Eleutherae*" —a village on the border between Thèbes and Athens, which later gave its name to the worship of "*Dionysus Eleuthereus*" ("*Dionysus the Liberator*"). This is the same cave where Cadmus, after sacrificing the sacred cow during the founding of Thèbes, found and killed the dragon of the god Ares while searching for water —whose teeth he then sowed into the ground, to produce the generation of the "*Spartoi*." Next to the cave, there is an altar to Dionysus. Under the shelter of the cave, a herdsman named "*Ordion*" («*Ὀρδίων*») has spent the night, after grazing his sheep nearby the previous day.

The god Dionysus speaks to the herdsman while the latter is still asleep. He informs him that he has freed Antiope from the bonds of Dirce (wife of Lycus —the king of Thèbes and brother of Nycteus, Antiope's father), and that Antiope is quickly returning to the cave, in order to search for traces of the two twin boys she had given birth at that spot, about twenty years ago —when returning, back then, from Sicyon to Thèbes, as a captive of Lycus. Deep in her heart, she feels they are still alive. The herdsman had found these two boys in the cave at that time and has raised them, not having known their origins, until now. Dionysus reveals to the herdsman that the two boys he had found and raised are Antiope's children and that he himself has named these boys "*Zethus*" and "*Amphion*." However, he forbids him to reveal to the boys their true origins and names until he permits it.]

DIONYSUS (voice)

Awake, good herdsman, hearken to my voice.
Dionysus I am, herald of Fates.
Antíope, long bound by Dirce's chains,
Is now set free, her spirit unconfined.
You honor "Eleuthereus", me, your god,
Whose power breaks the cruelest bonds of man.
Antíope returns with haste and hope,
To seek the cave wherein her twins were born,
Some twenty years ago, in darkest night.
Within her heart, she feels their breath of life,
Believing they yet walk upon this earth.

Those twins, once lost, are now your charge and care.
Unknowing, you have raised them as your own.
Yet know this, herdsman, keep their truth concealed,
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 181 & 182]
*One I have named "Zethus", strong and fair,
*For she sought comfort in her birthing care;
*The other, "Amphion", was named in strife,
*Born by the roadside, 'midst turmoil rife.

By my decree, their heritage stays veiled,
Until the time that I shall lift the shroud.
Their noble blood do not reveal to them,
Nor whisper of their mother's noble plight.

[The herdsman awakens. He is unable —as well as afraid— to discern the god's exact intentions, at this present moment; although he suspects what is about to happen; being aware of the curse of the House of Cadmus, which, by extension, plagues the throne of Thèbes: the necklace that the god Hephaestus had given to Harmonia —daughter of the god Ares— at her wedding to Cadmus, as revenge for Cadmus's hubris —for his arrogant pride in boasting that he married a god's daughter with more grandeur than the gods' celebrations on Olympus. It is the same curse that had killed Pentheus at the hands of his own mother, Agáve, a few years back; the same curse that would later haunt the royal house of the Labdacids, up to the time of Oedipus and Antigone.

The herdsman worries that Dionysus, as Zeus's agent to hasten the curse, taking on the role of the punishing god once more, will repeat actions similar to those that occurred during Pentheus's time (refer to Euripides' "*The Bacchae*"); that the two boys, not recognizing their mother and thinking her to be a fugitive, might turn against her, returning her to Dirce's cruel hands —or, even worse, killing her. The herdsman prays to Dionysus, as he fears that he himself is about to become an instrument of the god's impending dark, vengeful frenzy.]

HERDSMAN

What dream is this that stirs my soul to dread?
What truth do godly lips impart to me?
Antíope, the mother of my sons?
The ones I‘ve reared with tender, fathered care?
This secret weighs upon my troubled heart,
For fear of what such knowledge might ignite.

What curse does linger o’er Cadmus’ land?
The necklace gifted by Hephaestus’ hand,
to Mar’s daughter, fair Harmonia
—a symbol turned, to bring misfortune’s brand.
Pride’s hubris claimed a grandeur more divine
Than Olympian feasts —blasphemous jest!
And, thus, the curse that slew proud Pentheus’ form,
Now haunts the royal line, the Theban throne!

My heart is fraught with premonitions dark,
That Dionysus, as avenger grim,
Will play the role of godly punisher,
Repeating past destructions, blood and woe.
What if these sons, unknowing of their line,
Perceive their mother as a threat, a foe
—returning her to Dirce’s cruel embrace,
Or worse, committing matricide in rage?

Oh, Dionysus, spare my soul this fight;
I fear I‘m but a pawn in divine game.
Guide me, great god, protect me from this plight,
Lest I become an instrument of wrath.
I pray for wisdom in this fateful hour,

To navigate the labyrinth of doom.

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 179]
*May you be generous to me, I pray,
*And to my master —whose the pastures lay
*On Oenoe's plains; where fields of green extend
*To Eleutherae, where these lands do blend.

Notes & Commentary:

In the fragments of Euripides' "*Antiope*", there seems to be no actual appearance of Dionysus; instead, most possibly, the entire Prologue is being spoken by the herdsman; probably, a little differentiated that in my own dramaturgy and, most possibly, by not making any reference to the "*curse of Cadmus*".

According to the ancient sources, "*Ordion*" was actually a farmer, who had no children by himself.

About the names "*Amphion*" and "*Zethus*":
The names "*Zethus*" and "*Amphion*" carry an etymological significance which contrasts with their roles and personalities in the play.

"*Zethus*", derived from the Greek «*ζητέω*» ("*to seek*"), symbolizes the comfort sought during his birth, fitting his practical and laborious nature.

The name "*Amphion*" has been the subject of various interpretations, but its exact origin remains somewhat obscure. The most accepted etymology is that "*Amphion*" is derived from the Greek word «*ἀμφί*» (amphi), meaning "*around*" or "*on both sides",* either combined or not with an unspecified verbal root that conveys the sense of being associated with something or someone on all sides. This interpretation aligns with Amphion's legendary association with music that could move stones and build walls, suggesting an encompassing or influential presence. The Greek prefix «*ἀμφί*» was historically used to signify something all-encompassing or surrounding. In this case, it could be potentially linked with the verb «*ἔννυμι*» (ennymi), meaning "*to clothe*", hinting at someone adorned or well-dressed; this connection is further supported by the term «*ἄμφια*» (amphia), referring to the ceremonial garments of priests. Amphion's name, thus, encapsulates a sense of pervasive influence and potentially also of adornment, thus fitting his character's association with music and the arts. Amphion, known for playing the lyre, embodies the ever-wandering, artistic, and spiritual aspects of life, seeking divine truth.

These names not only characterize the twins' origins, but also set the stage for their distinct personalities and roles in the unfolding drama; such an interpretation aligns the origins of the names with the respective dispositions of the characters in "*Antiope*", and enhances the thematic depth and the character development within the narrative.

About Hereditary Guilt:
The concept of hereditary guilt (the transference of guilt and divine retribution from one generation to another) is a prominent theme in classical Greek thought, particularly in the context of Attic tragedy. This notion has its roots in pre-Homeric Greece, where the actions of ancestors were believed to cast long shadows over their descendants, shaping their fates and fortunes. In tragedies such as those of the House of Atreus or the tale of Oedipus, we see how the sins of the forebears, through acts of hubris or moral

transgression, bring suffering and calamity upon their progeny. These narratives underscore the belief that divine justice is inexorable and often extends beyond the individual to encompass their lineage, ensuring that the consequences of their actions are fully realized.

In my adaptation of "*Antiope*," I have taken a justifiable dramaturgical approach by extending the concept of hereditary sin beyond Cadmus' bloodline to include the throne of Thèbes itself. This extension is rooted in the idea that accepting the throne from a sinner is, in essence, an act of accepting and justifying the sinner's behavior and hubris, rather than condemning it. Thus, those who ascend to the throne of Thèbes, regardless of their direct lineage, inherit the curse associated with it. This interpretation aligns with the ancient Greek ethos, where «*μίασμα*» ("*miasma*" = spiritual pollution) could attach itself to places and roles, as well as to individuals and their descendants.

By applying this concept, I aim to highlight the pervasive and lingering nature of divine retribution in Greek tragedy. It reflects the interconnectedness of human actions and divine will, emphasizing that power and responsibility cannot be disentangled from the moral legacies of the past. This approach not only enriches the narrative, by adding layers of moral and philosophical complexity, but also remains faithful to the spirit of classical Greek thought. It underscores the timeless relevance of these ancient themes, illustrating how the consequences of hubris and moral failings resonate across generations, shaping destinies and defining the human condition.

Setting and Introduction:

The prologue sets the stage for the unfolding tragedy, by placing us in the mythical setting of Mount Cithaeron, near Eleutherae. The historical and geographical context is rich, invoking the mythic past where Cadmus founded Thèbes. The cave, the altar to Dionysus, and the references to the dragon of Ares and the Spartoi connect the present action to the deep roots of Theban mythology, establishing a sense of continuity and fate.

Characters:

Dionysus: Dionysus appears as a divine herald and liberator —true to his name "*Eleuthereus*", by liberating Antiope—, introducing the key plot points. His role as "*Dionysus Eleuthereus*" underscores his power to free and transform. Dionysus informs the herdsman of Antiope's imminent return and the hidden identities of the two boys, Amphion and Zethus. His command to keep their origins secret adds tension and foreshadows future revelations. Dionysus's presence emphasizes the gods' direct involvement in human affairs and the inevitable unfolding of fate.

Herdsman: The herdsman's awakening and reaction provide a human perspective on the divine machinations. His fear and confusion highlight the vulnerability of mortals caught in the web of the gods' plans. The herdsman's internal monologue reveals his awareness of the curse on the House of Cadmus and on the royal throne of Thèbes, tracing its history from Hephaestus's gift to Harmonia —through the downfall of Pentheus, to the present day. This curse symbolizes the inescapable nature of fate and the recurring themes of pride, hubris, and divine retribution in Theban legend.

Curse of Cadmus:

The mention of the necklace given by Hephaestus to Harmonia as a curse is crucial. It serves as a symbol of the destructive power of pride and the gods' vengeance. This curse, having led to the death of Pentheus, is a foreboding element, suggesting that the present generation is also doomed to suffer. The herdsman's anxiety about Dionysus's potential role as an avenger aligns with this theme, indicating that history may repeat itself.

Fears and Prayers:

The herdsman's fears that the boys might not recognize their mother and could harm her, or that he himself might become an instrument of divine wrath, add to the Prologue's suspense. His prayer to Dionysus for guidance and protection reflects the human desire for control in the face of overwhelming divine forces. It also highlights the tragic irony that humans, despite their prayers and actions, are often powerless to alter the course of fate predetermined by the gods.

Themes:

The prologue introduces key themes such as fate, divine intervention, identity, and recognition. It sets up the central conflict, by revealing the hidden lineage of Amphion and Zethus and foreshadows the trials they will face. The tension between mortal free will and divine control is evident, preparing the audience for the dramatic events to come.

Conclusion:

In summary, the Prologue blends mythology, divine presence, and human emotion to set the stage for the tragedy. It provides essential backstory, establishes the stakes, and introduces the main characters and themes, aiming to create a compelling and ominous beginning which will engage the audience and will prepare them for the unfolding drama.

Entrance Choral Ode
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN & AMPHION

[Amphion enters the stage, playing the lyre given to him by the god Hermes and singing. Shortly after, a Chorus of Athenian shepherds enters, who rejoice in life and revel in merriment. They accompany him in dances and songs, after his divine tunes have made them stop their drunken fighting.]

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— Friends, do come forth to music's gentle sway!
This noble youth —whose lyre divine we hear—
Brings forth a tune that leads us out of fray;
thyrsus in hand, to Dionysus we cheer.

—— In joyous dance, we join his merry song.
With wine and laughter, let the night prolong.
The music's magic lifts our spirits high,
As stars above us light the darkened sky.

—— The lyre's sweet notes, like whispers from the gods,
Do weave a spell that breaks our earthly bonds.
In harmony, we celebrate the night,
And honor Bacchus with our hearts so light.

—— So come, dear friends, and let the revels start
—for, life is short, but joy can fill the heart.
Together in this moment, free and bright,
We honor Dionysus with our might.

AMPHION

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 182a]
**——* Of Ether, Gaia —mother of all—, I sing;*
**Their boundless gifts —to which our spirits cling.*
[Based on Euripides' "Antiope", fr. 192]
**Oh Time, oh breath of gods, oh love for song!*
**In your eternal dance, we all belong!*
**From Chaos sprung the Cosmos, in its might;*
**The stars did form; brought light to darkest night.*
**The gods rejoice, while praises fill the skies;*
**In hymns of glory, all creation lies.*

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 190]
**From Hermes' hands, a wondrous gift did spring:*
**A lyre to soothe, and joy to mortals bring.*
**Once, he stole Apollo's sacred cattle,*
**And in his cleverness, parried battle.*
**He crafted then this lyre from tortoise shell,*
**To mend the rift, in Apollo's heart to dwell.*

*With every note, the fields and groves rejoice,
*And nature dances to its tuneful voice.

Lyre of mine, your strings as beams of light;
In joyful melodies, forever bright.
For, in your tunes, the power to unite
And guide us through the darkness of the night.

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— For Dionysus borne are laurel wreaths.
Goblets of wine and golden fruits bequeath.
In revelry, we dance with eager feet.
Oh, Athens' youth, come join this joyful beat!

AMPHION

—— Lyre, do echo; voice, do pierce the air,
Guiding our melodies, tender and fair.
Beneath your song, the gods themselves do prance;
In joyous splendor blessed, in night's advance.

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— Rapturous hymn, our feet do lead along!
Our noble guide of godly kin we praise!
With wreaths and wine, we revel in this song,
Until the morning brings the sun's sweet rays.

Notes & Commentary:

The Entrance Ode sets a festive and harmonious tone for the unfolding drama. It juxtaposes the themes of joy and revelry with the looming undercurrent of impending tragedy, encapsulating the dual nature of the human experience in Greek tragedy.

The verses 79-86 have been freely constructed, based on the following fragment of Euripides' "*Antiope*":
«*λύρα βοῶν <γὰρ> ῥύσι' ἐξερρύσατο.*»
This verse describes Hermes either freely offering or being made to hand over his lyre, as a compensation "*for the cattle*". This is, most probably, a direct reference to the myth of Hermes stealing Apollo's cattle and then offering his lyre to him, as a compensation. Thus, the bulk of these verses do not refer to Euripides' own verses, but have been created by me, by making this very much plausible hypothesis.

Characters:

Chorus of Athenian Men: The Chorus of Athenian men embodies the spirit of celebration and communal joy. Their entrance, synchronized with Amphion's lyre, highlights the communal aspect of Greek festivals dedicated to Dionysus, the god of wine, revelry, and theatre. The Chorus's verses evoke the collective joy and the liberating power of music and dance, central elements in Dionysian worship. The repetition of themes related to music, dance, and the night sky serves to underscore the ephemeral nature of human pleasures and the transcendence offered by the divine.

Amphion: Amphion, with his divine lyre bestowed by Hermes, represents the harmonious blend of art and divinity. His music is portrayed as a conduit between the mortal and divine realms, capable of enchanting not just humans but the gods themselves. Amphion's verses emphasize the purity and joy that music brings, positioning him as a figure of serene artistry and of spiritual connection.

Thematic Elements:

Joy and Revelry: This Ode is replete with imagery of joy, dance and music, capturing the essence of Dionysian festivities. It reflects a moment of communal bliss and harmony, providing a stark contrast to the personal tragedies that will unfold. This serves to highlight the dual nature of Dionysus as both a liberator and a harbinger of madness.

Divine Connection: Amphion's music, described as reaching the gods and breaking earthly bonds, symbolizes the transcendental power of art. This divine connection reinforces the importance of the gods in everyday Greek life and of their direct influence on human affairs. It also foreshadows the divine interventions that will shape the destiny of the characters in the play.

Ephemerality of Life: The Chorus's call to enjoy the present moment reflects a classical Greek awareness of life's fleeting nature. By urging the audience to celebrate and revel in the "now", this Ode underscores the temporary reprieve from everyday suffering that Dionysian worship offers.

Harmony and Unity: The harmonious blending of Amphion's lyre with the Chorus's dance and song symbolizes the ideal unity of human and divine, art and life. This unity, however, is fragile and temporary, hinting at the discord and disunity that will later challenge the characters.

Dramatic Function:

Setting the Tone: This Ode establishes a festive, light-hearted tone that contrasts sharply with the darker themes of vengeance, justice, and suffering that will dominate the tragedy. This contrast serves to heighten the emotional impact of the play's subsequent events.

Character Introduction: Amphion is introduced not just as a musician but as a figure of divine inspiration and artistic purity. His role as a mediator between the divine and mortal realms is subtly established, preparing the audience for his significant part in the narrative.

Foreshadowing: While this Ode is celebratory, it subtly foreshadows the darker themes of the play. The invocation of Dionysus hints at the dual nature of his influence —both joyous and destructive. The emphasis on music and harmony suggests an impending disruption, aligning with the tragic arc of the story.

Audience Engagement: By engaging the audience with familiar themes of Dionysian worship and of communal joy, this Ode draws them into the world of the play. It reminds them of the cultural and religious contexts that frame the narrative, enhancing their emotional and intellectual investment in the unfolding drama.

Conclusion:

The Entrance Ode is a blend of celebration and foreshadowing, encapsulating the joy and divine connection that music and dance bring to human life. It sets the stage for the complex interplay of harmony and discord, and of pleasure and pain, that will characterize this tragedy. Through the Chorus and Amphion, the Ode underscores the transient nature of human joy and of the ever-present influence of the divine, preparing the audience for the narrative to come.

1st Scene
ZETHUS & AMPHION

[Zethus is drawn by the music of his brother's lyre and enters the stage. Unlike the Chorus, he does not share the same views on what holds the greatest significance in a person's life. Having listened to his brother's song while hunting on the mountain —and annoyed by it— he attempts to admonish Amphion. He believes that a person should live life guided by service to the common good and to the state, leading a virtuous life —close to nature and away from frivolous entertainments and indulgence. These views spark a reaction from his brother. Thus begins a debate between them, in which each passionately defends his own opinions, similarly to the famous "*agon*" («*ἀγών*» = rhetorical contest) in Euripides' "*Antiope*". In the end, Amphion skillfully pretends to accept his supposed "defeat", in order to make his irritating brother stop arguing —while simultaneously sensing that, for some unknown reason, the upcoming events require them to remain united.]

ZETHUS

[*Entering the scene, enraged:*]

Hark, brother; from the mountain where I roamed,
Your melodies did echo through the glen
As hounds, while I pursued the stag's swift form.
And, now I find you here, in idle song
—whilst duties call, and men their labors tend.

AMPHION

Oh, my dear brother, calm your troubled brow;
For, music's charm can soothe the restless heart.
The lyre's sweet notes bring joy to weary souls,
And elevate our thoughts to realms divine.

ZETHUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 185]
*Oh, duties you neglect that should be kept.
*Born with a manly nature, yet have leapt
*—your own self to display like woman fair;
*And, Justice finds no counsel in your lair.

AMPHION

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 199]
*You fault my body, call it weak and frail.
*But, if my mind with wisdom does prevail,
*Then greater is this gift —I do proclaim—
*Than any strength which grants to warriors fame.

ZETHUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 187a]
*Cast down your lyre, take up arms with might;
*Your instrument you play does bring no gain.
*Go forth, embrace the soldier's life, and fight;

*Live well, live strong, and let your valor reign.

AMPHION
Dear brother, there is more to life than toil.
The soul must feed on beauty, on the arts;
For, in this sweetness, man achieves his height
—not merely in the sweat of brow and hand.

ZETHUS
No, brother, it is not in song we find
The true path of a life well-lived and just.
The call of duty, service to the state,
Are virtues found in actions —not in tunes.

AMPHION
Oh, brother, can you not but sense the peace
That music brings —a balm for troubled minds?
In harmonies, the world finds balance true;
And, in these tunes, a calmness deep and pure.

ZETHUS
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 183]
*Idle and fond of wine, your music here
*Neglects the work, ignores the pressing need.
*You bring this trouble, feeding on delight
*—forgetting toil: the land's own, rightful creed.

AMPHION
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 193]
*Whoever is so active, should be still;
*A fool he is, when ease he could fulfill.
*He, who at peace is steadfast to his friends,
*from politics away, there wisdom bends.

ZETHUS
"Wisdom", you say? In these idle strings?
No, brother, wisdom lies in earnest toil,
In shaping stone, in guiding plough through soil,
In standing firm against the city's foes.

AMPHION
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 194]
*A quiet life, a friend to friends secures;
*In peace we find the strength to long endure.
*Do not extol the ventures fraught with strife;
*For, I prefer a calm and steady life.

ZETHUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 187]
*But, any man who well his life secures,
*Yet lets it fall through negligence and lures
*—delighting in the song and dance all day,
*And always chasing pleasure's fleeting sway—,
*At home, in field, and polis will be naught
*—a friend to none, his worth will be forgot.
*For, man's true nature fades and falls from grace,
*When conquered by sweet pleasure's soft embrace.

AMPHION

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 198]
*And if a man with fortune and with wealth
*Pursues no beauty —only cares for self—,
*I shall not call him happy, full of grace,
*But merely guardian of goods in place.

ZETHUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 186]
*No wisdom in a grown man, who is made
*Inferior by art so lightly played;
*A man who seeks delight in idle song,
*Will find his house in ruin ere too long.

AMPHION

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 201]
*And what of those who live for muscle's might?
*Their wealth will fail, their strength a fleeting light.
*For, those accustomed to gluttony's ways,
*Are trapped within those habits, all their days.

ZETHUS

So, do you claim the ploughman's work is
naught?
Or mason's chisel shapes but idle stone?
The state's foundation lies in labor's hand
—not in the fleeting strains of lyre or lute.

AMPHION

The plough and chisel —tools of noble craft—
Even they need their moments of repose.
The soul that never sings, that never dreams,
Becomes as stone, unyielding, hard, and cold.

ZETHUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 188]
*Be persuaded, cease your foolish ways,

*Embrace the toil, let labor fill your days.
*Sing of the fields, the plough, the flocks you tend;
*And, wisdom true will mark you as a friend.
*Leave fancy arts for those with empty homes,
*For in hard work, the spirit proudly roams.

AMPHION

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 196]
*Such is the life of mortals, sad yet true:
*Not wholly blessed, nor always in their due.
*One moment prosperous, the next in plight.
*Why, then, not live in joy, and shun the fight?
*In happiness uncertain, let's not dwell,
*But seize the day, and bid our woes farewell!

ZETHUS

So, brother, would you have us dream all day,
While foes encroach and crops await the hand?
The state requires all men of sturdy will,
Not dreamers lost in idle harmonies.

AMPHION

The dreamer's heart, dear brother, sees beyond,
—to worlds where peace and beauty reign supreme.
Without such visions, toil becomes a chain,
Binding the soul in dark, unyielding night.

ZETHUS

Your words are fair, but hollow to mine ear.
The state's great needs surpass these gentle strains.
Our mother, Nature, calls for strength and might
—not songs that vanish with the evening breeze.

AMPHION

"For Strength and might", you say —oh, noble traits.
Yet, strength without the temperance of arts
Becomes but tyranny, a force unchained,
Destroying all it once sought to protect.

ZETHUS

Then "balance", you proclaim, between the two?
A life of labor mixed with fleeting song?
Yet, labor's weight is more than song can bear,
And music's charms too light to lift its load.

AMPHION

In balance, brother, lies our truest strength:

The harmony of labor and of art.
Each needs the other —as the day the night—,
To form a life both beautiful and just.

ZETHUS
Perhaps there's truth within your gentle words.
Yet, still, my heart leans towards life of toil.
For, in the field and forge —the city's heart—,
There lies the pulse of life, its beating core!

AMPHION
And, in the lyre's chords, the city's soul
—a spirit lifted high above the earth!
So let us join, dear brother, hand in hand,
In work and song —a union strong and bright!

ZETHUS
My brother, though your words are soft as silk,
I cannot yield to such a view so light.
Yet, for the sake of brotherhood and peace,
I'll cease my quarrel; let us find our path.

AMPHION
Agreed, dear brother, let our hearts unite;
For, coming days may test our bond anew.
Together strong, in labor and in song,
We'll face whatever Fate may bring to us.

ZETHUS
Then let us pledge, no matter what may come.
Our bond of blood shall hold us firm and true.
For, in this union, strength we shall derive,
And face the future with unyielding hearts.

AMPHION
To this I swear, by all the gods above:
Our bond shall be a beacon in the night.
Together, brother, we shall find our way,
And in this balance, reach our greatest heights.

ZETHUS
So be it, brother, let our words be deeds;
And, may the gods watch over us with grace.
For, in this promise, we shall find our might
—and build a future bright, for all to see.

[Amphion stops playing the lyre. The dancing and the revelry cease.]

Notes & Commentary:

While most of the fragments of Euripides' "*Antiope*" were used for the "*agon*" between Amphion and Zethus —with only 2 or 3 exceptions— in this play, they appear closer in place than they ideally should be. In Euripides' original play, the same Act ("*Episode*") would likely have been more extensive —probably aligning with the typical length of around 180 verses for the Episodes in his tragedies. This suggests that the agon, although central, would have been interspersed with additional scenes and dialogues, thus enriching the narrative and providing greater dramatic context.

Characters:

Zethus and Amphion: The scene introduces us to the two central characters, Zethus and Amphion, who are the twin sons of Antiope. Their differing viewpoints on life set the stage for a philosophical debate that echoes the famous "*agon*" («*ἀγών*») in Euripides' "*Antiope*".

Themes:

Conflict Between Work and Art: The primary theme in this scene is the conflict between practical, laborious life and the more artistic, contemplative life. Zethus represents the former, emphasizing the importance of hard work, duty, and service to the state. Amphion, on the other hand, champions the value of music, art, and the spiritual upliftment they provide.

Nature vs. Civilization: Zethus advocates for a life close to nature, grounded in the physical and tangible aspects of existence. Amphion, while not dismissing the importance of labor, argues for the need to cultivate the soul through the arts, suggesting that true civilization requires a balance of both.

Unity and Brotherhood: Despite their differing views, the brothers ultimately find common ground in their bond and pledge to remain united. This unity is crucial as it foreshadows the challenges they will face and the strength they will need to confront their shared destiny.

Structure:

Dialogue and Debate: The scene is structured as a debate, with each brother presenting his arguments passionately. This structure not only serves to flesh out their characters but also to engage the audience in a philosophical discourse, making them reflect on the values each brother represents.

Resolution: The debate concludes with Amphion skillfully pretending to accept defeat to maintain peace and unity with Zethus. This resolution highlights Amphion's wisdom and foresight, recognizing the importance of their unity in the face of upcoming challenges.

Symbolism:

The Lyre and the Hunt: The lyre, played by Amphion, symbolizes art, culture, and the higher pursuits of the mind and spirit. Zethus, who enters after hunting, symbolizes the physical, practical aspects of life. Their respective activities at the start of the scene serve as a visual representation of their differing philosophies.

Balance and Harmony: Amphion's argument for balance between labor and art symbolizes the need for harmony in life. This balance is essential not only for personal fulfillment but also for the well-being of society as a whole.

Foreshadowing:

Upcoming Challenges: The discussion about unity and the pledge to remain together hint at the forthcoming trials the brothers will face. Their different strengths and philosophies will be crucial in overcoming these challenges, and their unity will be their greatest asset.

Historical and Mythological References:

Euripides' "Antiope": The scene is a direct reference to and analogy of the "*agon*" («*ἀγών*») between the brothers in Euripides' "*Antiope*". This not only pays homage to the original play but also situates the current narrative within the larger context of Greek tragedy and myth.

Cultural Commentary:

Ancient Greek Values: The debate reflects broader cultural values in ancient Greece, such as the tension between the life of the "*polis*" («*πόλις*» = city-state) and the individual's pursuit of personal excellence (arete). It also touches on the Greek appreciation for both physical prowess and intellectual/artistic achievement.

Relation to today's lifestyle: The debate between Zethus and Amphion resonates strongly with the dilemmas faced in today's materialistic society. In an era where the relentless pursuit of wealth and productivity often overshadows the value of arts and culture, this rhetorical contest underscores the timeless importance of balance. Zethus' focus on labor and service to the state mirrors the contemporary emphasis on economic success and practical achievements, while Amphion's advocacy for the arts highlights the need for spiritual and emotional enrichment. This scene challenges modern audiences to reflect on their own lives and consider how integrating creativity and contemplation can lead to a more fulfilling and harmonious existence.

Conclusion:

The first scene effectively sets the stage for the unfolding drama, by establishing the characters of Zethus and Amphion and their contrasting philosophies. It introduces key themes and foreshadows the challenges to come; all, while engaging the audience in a timeless debate about the balance between labor and art. The resolution of their argument, with an emphasis on unity, prepares the audience for the brothers' joint journey ahead.

1st Choral Ode
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN

ATHENIAN CHORUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 910]

*—— *Blessed is the man who, silent, masters lore,*
Not troubling citizens, nor urging war
—but sees the ageless order, Nature's plan:
Whence it was formed, and how it all began.
For, such a man does walk a path upright;
Heeds not the call of shameful deeds in sight.

—— *Honored is he who labors with his hands,*
Who tills the soil and works the fruitful lands
—with sweat and toil, he builds the city's might,
and guards its walls with steadfast heart each night.
In dedication, finds his noble place
—his every deed a testament to grace.

—— *Oh noble brothers, bound by blood and oath,*
May fortune favor you in days to come.
For, in your unity, the city's hope;
In toil and song, let wisdom find its place;
The seeds of greatness, unity has sown.
May we, like them, in balance find our peace.

—— *When hearts do clash, let reason be the guide,*
And may the light of truth dispel the night.
For, in each soul, where virtues do abide,
There lies the strength to rise above the fight.

Notes & Commentary:

The 1st Ode serves as a reflective pause after the intense debate between Zethus and Amphion in the first scene. The Chorus of Athenian Men praises the virtues of unity and harmony, emphasizing that the true strength of Thèbes lies in the balanced integration of different facets of life. This message is particularly poignant in light of the brothers' argument, where Zethus advocated for practical labor and Amphion for the arts. This Ode suggests that both perspectives are essential for the city's prosperity.

This Ode expands on the theme of balance, urging wisdom and reason to guide conflicts and emphasizing that greatness stems from the harmonious union of diverse elements. This sentiment echoes the broader themes of Greek tragedy, where the tension between opposing forces often leads to a deeper understanding and resolution.

The reference to "*noble Thèbes*" places the city's fate in the hands of its citizens, linking their personal harmony to the city's overall well-being. This sets the stage for the next act, in which Antiope's arrival and

the subsequent disbelief of her sons further complicate the narrative, adding layers to the themes of truth, identity, and recognition.

Overall, this Ode serves as both a reflection on the previous debate and a preface for the unfolding drama, reinforcing the play's exploration of the necessity of balance and unity in achieving true greatness and justice.

2nd Scene
ANTIOPE, ZETHUS, AMPHION, HERDSMAN, CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN

[Antiope enters the stage, running and tired, having escaped from Dirce with the help of Dionysus, who freed her from her bonds. She introduces herself and describes her life to the Chorus and the two brothers —unaware of who they truly are.]

ANTIOPE

Oh, weary wanderer, I‘ve found brief rest,
In lands unknown, where Fate has led me hence.
From Dirce’s cruel hand, I‘ve flown like bird,
Unfettered now, by Bacchus’ grace, I‘m freed.
I stand before you, strangers though you seem,
And tell my tale of sorrow and of woe.

In Thèbes proud halls I once did carefree dwell,
Loved by the gods, but cursed by mortal spite;
‘Cause, Cadmus, once, the dragon’s teeth did sow;
the bowels of the earth sprang warriors’ wreath
—a heritage of glory and of pride,
yet cursed by all the gods, with sorrows plied.

Born of Nycteus, priestess in this land,
I honored Bacchus; piety made its stand.
Until Zeus came, in form of satyr’s guise;
A wild creature, in the night did rise.
With godly might, he took me —made me bear
children of heaven, amid mortal care.

In shame, I fled from Thèbes to Sicyon,
To Epopéus —king in solace— drawn.
For fear of father’s wrath and public scorn.
I wed the king —my dignity reborn.
A union blessed with love, but marred by strife;
For, Lycus sought to fiercely claim my life.

From Sicyon’s embrace he tore me swift;
To Thèbes he brought me, through the shadows’ rift.
[Based on Euripides’ “*Antiope*”, fr. 207]
*Captured by Lycus, chained and bound by Fate,
*I bore twin sons, yet lost them in the dark;
*Two babes, stolen by Night, in the unknown
*—in this cave here, upon mount Cithaeron.

A captive then, in Dirce’s hands I fell;
A cruel tormentor, wrought by Spite’s own spell.
In chains and darkness, deeply how I mourned!
—for, lost were sons, and joy away was torn.

In Dirce's grasp, each day held firmly, tight;
Yet, hope remained, in memory's clasped light.

Oh, how I yearned for my lost sons' embrace,
Their tiny hands, their gentle, smiling face.
Though Dirce's cruelty never knew no bounds,
In dreams of them, my solace always found.
Their memory, a beacon in my night,
In our reunion, my heart's only light.

Through endless days of pain and sorrow's tide,
The thought of them kept hope alive inside.
I prayed to gods, for mercy and for grace,
To guide me back to my own sons' embrace.
And now, by Bacchus' hand, I've found release
From Dirce's grip; and here I seek my peace.

Oh, strangers, hear my tale of endless strife,
Of noble birth, yet burdened, martyred life!
In this harsh land, where Fate's cruel path has led,
I stand before you, weary, sore, oppressed.

Loved by the gods, yet cursed by mortal spite,
My life a testament to darkest night.
But in my heart, a spark of hope does gleam,
To find my sons, to end this mournful dream.

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 205 & 208]
*I understand the suffering I bear,
*And this no small is burden to declare.
*For, ignorance of pain holds some delight;
*In misery, unknowing is a light.
*If overlooked by gods, my sons and I,
*It follows still; among men, it's known why:
*There must be some who face misfortune's curse
*—while others, in their grace the gods immerse.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— *Oh, tragic tale of sorrow deep!*
The gods above do sometimes weep.
Antíope, your grief we share;
For, Fortune's wheel turns unaware.

AMPHION
Your story, lady, stirs the heart with grief,
Yet we, the sons of labor, know you not.
Why speak these woes to strangers of the field?
What your heart seeks, in this uncertain hour?

Oh brother, hear her out, though strange it seems;
For, in her words, a truth may yet be found.
But lady, tell us more of these lost sons,
From your maternal breast whom Fate has torn.

[Enter the Herdsman, who begins to recognize Antiope's identity, having heard the last part of her monologue while approaching.]

HERDSMAN
[*To Antiope*:]
By Zeus, how could it be? The sorrow's queen?
I know you, though the years have passed unseen.
Antíope, you are, if eyes speak true:
The mother seeking sons whom Fate withdrew.

ANTIOPE
Good shepherd, can it be? You met my kin?
Long have I wandered, seeking trace of them.
Oh, speak! Did Até strike my dearest ones,
In Cithaeron's cave, beneath the bright sun?

HERDSMAN
I know some youths, who might fit your lost kin;
Among these hills are raised, with strength within.
They bear no noble name, nor title's grace,
Yet, noble hearts do shine upon their face.

ANTIOPE
My heart does leap to hear these names you say,
Oh, could it be, my sons, whom I adore?
Yet, doubt and fear do cloud my weary mind;
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 204]
*For, many tricks play gods upon mankind.

[Amphion and Zethus refuse to accept Antiope's words, not believing anything from the story she has told them—they think that she has simply escaped from Lycus's palace, possibly having committed some dishonorable act.]

AMPHION
Your words are strange; yet, something stirs within:
A truth is felt, though reason seems but thin.
Could this be real? Yet, caution we must keep
—lest we be snared by falsehoods dark and deep.

ZETHUS
[To Amphion:]
No, brother, I suspect deceit at play,
A runaway, who seeks to lead astray.
No proof had she, no sign to show her claim,
Why trust a tale that bears no certain name?

[To Antiope:]
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 210]
*For, I do not believe, in secret night
*That Zeus, in guise of beast, approached your sight,
*To come to your own bed as though a man,
*With wicked form, to execute his plan.

ANTIOPE
Oh, kind strangers, truly if you're kind,
Look to my eyes, and let the truth be known.
By suffering's bond, by pain shared and shown,
Believe my words; don't stand with doubt and
blame.

Oh, noble youths, I beg you, understand!
My heart is torn by sorrow's cruel demand.
Two sons I bore, yet lost them in the night;
In Cithaeron's cave, they vanished from my sight.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 211]
*—— *How many fortunes, forms of woe,*
**Mankind's miseries, vast grow!*
**An end to them, one cannot know;*
**In endless tides, sufferings flow!*

AMPHION
Your plea is heard, but no proof is yet found;
For, trust in strangers oft leads to the ground.
Yet, something in your gaze —a whisper— speaks,
Of truths long buried, and of bonds it seeks.

ZETHUS
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 206]
*Brother, well-spoken words might yet deceive,
*With beauty's guise, the truth they might out-reave.
*Yet, this is not the test most sure and right:
*'Tis character and truth that stand in light.

Enough! No more of this uncertain tale,
Let action speak, and let no heart prevail.

We'll take you to the king, and there decide,
Your fate, and ours, upon Judgment's tide.

AMPHION
But brother, should we not give pause to this?
Her sorrow seems too great for feigned deceit.
A heart in torment, lost in such abyss,
Could not so craft a tale of woes replete.

ZETHUS
Oh, brother, you are soft in heart and mind.
Her tears may sway you, yet be full of lies.
We cannot let a stranger's words so bind,
And lead us blind, where hidden danger lies.

AMPHION
Yet, look upon her face, and see the truth:
The lines of pain and years of suffering.
Her story bears the marks of grief's own proof;
And, in her eyes, the shadows darkly sing.

ZETHUS
I see your point; but still, I hold my ground;
For, many have deceived with tearful guise.
A heart too quick to trust may soon be bound
By Treachery's deceit and well-spun lies.

AMPHION
Then what do you propose, if not to trust?
Shall we condemn her to a fate unknown?
Her words may be the key to what we must
—unraveling the truths, from seeds long sown.

ZETHUS
I say we take her to the king at once;
Let him decide, for he has wisdom's grace.
And, if her tale be true, we'll recompense;
But if she lies, she'll meet her rightful fate.

AMPHION
To bring her to the king may be a choice;
Yet, harsh it feels to doubt her every word.
Her anguish deep, I hear it in her voice
—a plea for mercy, by despair incurred.

ZETHUS
We cannot act on sentiment alone;
For, Justice must be served by clearer sight.

Let us not waver; nor let pity own
The judgment that must come by morning's light.

AMPHION
I yield to you, though heavy is my heart.
We'll take her to the king, and there we'll see
If truth or falsehood from her lips do start;
Her fate and ours, determined thus shall be.

ZETHUS
[*Grasping Antiope*:]
Come then, strange woman, to the king we'll go;
And let his wisdom guide us through this plight.
For, in his hands the scales of Justice flow,
And by his judgment, day shall follow night.

[As the two brothers prepare to depart for Thèbes, with Antiope in their hands, the Herdsman steps forward, ready to reveal the truth.]

HERDSMAN
Hold, noble youths! The truth I must reveal,
Though Dionysus bade me lips to seal.
This lady stands before you, do not harm;
For, she speaks truth; her tale's no false charm!

[The two brothers do not listen to the herdsman, and prepare to leave for Thèbes —in order to deliver Antiope to Lycus and to her certain death, hoping for a reward in return for their loyalty. The herdsman is ready to reveal to Amphion and to Zethus their true origins and identities, thus disobeying Dionysus's orders. However, before he can do so, Dirce enters the stage, accompanied by a Chorus of Bacchants. Antiope seizes the opportunity and escapes from the brothers' grasp, while they are captivated by the beauty of Dirce and the Bacchants; she then runs to hide behind some nearby bushes, before Dirce gets close enough to recognize her.]

Notes & Commentary:

Characters:

Antiope: This scene introduces Antiope as a tragic heroine, having escaped from the cruel captivity of Dirce with the divine assistance of Dionysus. She shares her harrowing tale, unaware that she stands before her own sons, Zethus and Amphion.

Zethus and Amphion: The brothers continue to be characterized through their differing reactions to Antiope's story. Zethus remains skeptical and pragmatic, while Amphion is more empathetic and open to believing Antiope's sorrowful narrative.

Herdsman: The herdsman, who raised Zethus and Amphion, begins to recognize Antiope and struggles with the divine command to keep their true identities a secret.

Chorus of Athenian Men: The Chorus provides a sympathetic reaction to Antiope's tale, reflecting the audience's expected response and adding to the emotional weight of the scene.

Themes:

Recognition and Identity: The central theme of this scene is the impending recognition and revelation of true identities. Antiope's narrative and the herdsman's internal conflict build tension around the moment when the brothers will learn who they truly are.

Maternal Suffering and Hope: Antiope's story is one of profound maternal suffering, enduring captivity and the loss of her children. Yet, it is also a tale of hope, as she clings to the belief that her sons are still alive and that she will be reunited with them.

Skepticism vs. Empathy: The contrasting reactions of Zethus and Amphion highlight a philosophical debate about trust and belief. Zethus represents skepticism and caution, while Amphion embodies empathy and openness.

Divine Intervention and Fate: The presence of Dionysus and the herdsman's reference to divine commands underscore the role of gods in mortal affairs. The herdsman's fear of disobeying Dionysus adds a layer of tension related to fate and divine will.

Structure:

Antiope's Monologue: Antiope's extensive monologue provides her backstory, by detailing her noble lineage, her marriage to Epopéus, her capture by Lycus, and her suffering under Dirce. This monologue not only establishes her character but also connects her to the larger Theban mythos.

Dialogue and Conflict: The dialogue between Zethus, Amphion, and Antiope reveals their characters and sets up the central conflict. Zethus's skepticism and Amphion's empathy create dramatic tension, while the herdsman's interjections hint at the impending revelation.

Suspense and Foreshadowing: The herdsman's struggle with whether to reveal the truth foreshadows the dramatic climax. Dirce's entrance and Antiope's escape add a layer of suspense, as the scene leaves the audience anticipating the eventual recognition.

Symbolism:

Cithaeron's Cave: The cave on Mount Cithaeron is a symbol of hidden truths and past secrets. It is the birthplace of Zethus and Amphion, and now serves as a potential site of revelation.

Chains and Freedom: Antiope's escape from Dirce's chains, aided by Dionysus, symbolizes liberation and divine intervention. Her narrative of suffering and hope reflects the broader theme of freedom from oppression.

Foreshadowing:

Impending Recognition: The herdsman's near-revelation of the brothers' true identities foreshadows the eventual recognition scene. This impending moment is crucial to the narrative's progression.

Dirce's Role: Dirce's entrance at the end of the scene hints at further conflict and the potential for dramatic confrontation. Her presence adds tension and sets the stage for future events.

Historical and Mythological References:

Theban Mythology: Antiope's resentment for Cadmus' hybris casting a curse upon the royal throne of Thèbes, her marriage to Epopéus, and her captivity by Lycus tie the narrative to well-known Theban myths. These references enrich the story and provide context for the characters' actions and motivations. These reference tie the narrative to Theban mythology, enriching the story's historical and cultural context.

Euripides' "*Antiope*": This scene also draws on the "*agon*" from Euripides' "*Antiope*" —less than the 1st Scene—, emphasizing the philosophical debate between the two brothers, but on a different aspect of their character (the one of them being sympathetic to Antiope, while the other one being more of a pragmatist), and adding a layer of classical tragedy to the narrative.

Cultural Commentary:

Gender and Power: Antiope's story reflects the gendered power dynamics of ancient Greece. Her suffering under Dirce and Lycus highlights the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society, while her resilience and hope offer a counter-narrative of strength.

Trust and Deception: The debate between Zethus and Amphion about whether to trust Antiope speaks to broader themes of trust, deception, and the difficulty of discerning truth. This theme is particularly relevant in a society where appearances can be deceiving and divine will is often inscrutable.

Conclusion:

The second scene effectively builds on the tension and on the themes introduced in the Prologue. It deepens the audience's understanding of the characters, particularly of Antiope and of the brothers, and sets the stage for the dramatic revelations to come. The interplay of skepticism and empathy, combined with the herdsman's struggle with divine commands, creates a rich and engaging narrative that draws the audience further into the unfolding tragedy.

2nd Choral Ode
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— By all the gods, a peril close at hand;
Yet, Fate may guide us, if we firmly stand.
Antíope is gone, but truth will out;
In time, her sons will know, without a doubt.

—— Oh, Fate that weaves through mortal time,
Justice has met your harshest thread!
The gods do guide with hands sublime;
And, in their will, our paths are led.

Oh, tangled web of Fate and kin
—where truth and falsehood intertwine—,
May wisdom guide your steps within,
And Justice light the path divine.

—— The tale unfolds with secrets yet to bare
and hearts entwined in Destiny's great snare.
May all find truth, as night gives way to day,
And may the gods show forth their guiding ray.

Notes & Commentary:

The 2nd Ode serves as a reflective pause in the narrative, allowing the Chorus to comment on the unfolding events and on the overarching themes. The Chorus of Athenian Men highlights the tension between Fate (personified) and human action, a central motif in Greek tragedy. By invoking the gods and Fate, the Chorus underscores the belief in a divine order that governs human destiny, yet also acknowledges the uncertainty and complexity of mortal life.

The lines "*Oh, Fate that weaves through mortal time! / Justice has met your harshest thread).*" emphasize the inevitability of Fate and the harshness of divine Justice (personified). The Chorus recognizes that the gods' will is often inscrutable and that their guidance, though ultimately for the best, can lead to suffering and strife. The word "*thread*" is often associated with weaving and fate, particularly in the context of Greek mythology, where the Fates (Moirai) weave the destinies of mortals. However, it can also imply fragility and tension, as a thread can be easily broken or tangled.

The Chorus also reflects on the intricate relationship between truth and deception, particularly in the context of Antiope's situation. The phrase "*Oh, tangled web of Fate and kin / —where truth and falsehood intertwine—,"* speaks to the confusion and hidden truths that drive the drama forward. This acknowledgment sets the stage for the eventual revelation and resolution of these hidden truths.

By ending with a hopeful note, "*May all find truth, as night gives way to day, / And may the gods show forth their guiding ray.*", the Chorus anticipates the eventual resolution and restoration of (divine) order, suggesting that through the trials and tribulations, a clearer, more just outcome will emerge. This Ode thus encapsulates the tension and hope that characterize much of Greek tragedy, bridging the immediate events with the larger, inexorable flow of fate.

3rd Scene
DIRCE, HERDSMAN, ZETHUS, AMPHION, ANTIOPE, CHORUS OF BACCHANTS, CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN (silent)

[Dirce enters the stage, accompanied by a Chorus of Bacchants (young girls). Unaware that Antiope has sought refuge in the area, she has sent Lycus along with his guards to find her. Dirce herself arrives in the area with the intent to honor Dionysus Eleuthereus with Bacchic festivities. She mistakes Amphion and Zethus for servants of the herdsman's master, who are helping the herdsman with his tasks.]

DIRCE

Hail, shepherds of this verdant, peaceful land!
I come to honor Bacchus, god of wine,
With rites and revels, sacred to his name.
But tell me, who are these who work the field?
These youths, so strong and noble in their form;
Yet, bound to serve beneath your humble hand?

HERDSMAN

These are not slaves, merely my humble sons;
With me they labor, tending to the flocks.
Their strength and skill are gifts of simple life,
Not born of noble blood or royal halls.

ZETHUS

Great Dirce, though we labor with the soil,
We stand against the chains of slavery's toil.
A man is born with freedom in his heart,
And none should tear that sacred gift apart.

AMPHION

In each man's labor, there lies his worth
—not in the shackles placed upon his birth.
A kingdom just, must lift all of its men;
In common wealth, our greatness we defend.

DIRCE

Naive your thoughts, by youth's own fire burnt;
But, order's strength is built upon desire.
The gods themselves decree the roles we play;
And some must serve, for others to hold sway.
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 216 – *uncertain*]
*Therefore, a slave must never seek to find
*Free thought, nor gaze to idleness inclined.

ATHENIAN CHORUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 218]
*—— *Alas! How harsh the gods' decree,*

**To mark slaves with inferiority!*

ZETHUS

Yet, what of justice, honor, and the right?
Shall men be forced to live in endless night?
True strength is found in unity, not chains,
In shared prosperity, not others' pains.

AMPHION

A city that can thrive must lift its kin;
Not hold them down, to grind with battered skin.
The wealth of nations flows from every hand.
In freedom's light each man should truly stand.

DIRCE

Your words are bold, yet lack the weight of years;
For, in the gods' design, the truth appears.
To lead, to rule, requires a sturdy base;
And some must serve, to elevate the race.

ZETHUS

But true advancement comes from hearts set free,
From minds unbound by chains —in liberty.
When every soul can rise to meet its fate,
Then shall our city stand both strong and great.

AMPHION

Great Dirce, heed the call of common good
For Bacchus too, the god who loves this wood;
In revelry, shows freedom's joyous song
—in unity and strength, where we belong.

DIRCE

I see your passion, though I hold my ground;
For, in the gods' decree, our fates are bound.
But let the rites commence, for Bacchus reigns;
In joy and revelry, forget our pains!

How strange, that such as these should serve the plough,
When they could lead in battle or in court.
But let us not digress; the rites await,
And Bacchus calls for joy; let's celebrate!

[The Bacchants begin to dance and sing, in praise of Dionysus. While dancing, they discover the hidden Antiope. Dirce, recognizing her, does not hesitate to threaten her with death —though she does not mention her name during their conversation. Amphion and Zethus agree with this.]

BACCHANTS' CHORUS

—— Oh, Bacchus, god of wine and mirth,
We honor you with dance, and sing!
In forests deep, where rivers bind,
Your praises shall be sung all night!

—— Your power, wild and free, inspires
The hearts of men to joyous heights.
With thyrsus raised and burning fires,
We celebrate, lord of delights!

[*Seeing Antiope, and seizing her*:]
What vision stirs within these sacred groves?
A wretch who hides from justice, now revealed!
Though Fate has cast you low, your doom is sealed;
For, none escapes the reach of Dirce's hand!

ANTIOPE

Mercy, Great Lady, hear my humble plea!
By all the gods, I beg you, let me be!
For, I have suffered much, and seek but peace;
Release me from this torment, grant me ease.

DIRCE

No mercy for a wretch who flees her fate!
Your crimes are dark, and justice cannot wait.
The bull awaits, with horns to bind you fast;
And, in his wrath, your doom is sealed at last.

AMPHION

What you think, brother, of this woman's plight?
Her tale, though strange, does stir a sense of right.
Yet, Dirce's word does hold a weight profound;
And in this land, her justice is renowned.

ZETHUS

No, brother, she is but a lying wretch.
Her tales are false, her mind a cunning sketch.
We shall deliver her to Dirce's will,
And by this act, our duty shall fulfill!

[The Herdsman steps forward. Before the Bacchants seize Antiope to take her to the palace, he intervenes, revealing to the two brothers their true identities and the names Dionysus had given them. This is followed by the emotional scene of their recognition of their mother, Antiope —while Dirce and the Bacchants watch in astonishment.]

HERDSMAN

Hold, noble youths! Before this deed is done,

A truth must out, for she is not alone.
The mother stands before her long-lost sons,
And by the gods, this secret must be known!

AMPHION

What do you say? This woman, mother mine?
How can this be, such claims need to align.
Speak clear, old man; for, truth we must discern,
Ere Justice takes a path that none can turn.

HERDSMAN

By the Cithaeron's slopes, in years long past,
I found two babes, by Fate's cruel hand cast.
Raised them as mine, with care and tender hand.
These lads are yours, O Antiópe, grand!

The names of Zethus and Amphion fair,
Were given by the god whose gift they bear.
Your sons they are, and you their mother blessed;
This truth now told, let hearts be laid to rest.

AMPHION

Could it be so? This woman who we scorned,
Our mother, lost and long, for us has mourned?
Her eyes, her voice, distant memory stirs;
The echoes of our past now blend with hers.

ZETHUS

Our mother? Oh, this revelation grand!
How could we not have known, nor understand?
The blood that courses through our veins alike
Is drawn from her, whose sorrows now we strike!

ANTIOPE

Oh, sons of mine, my heart with joy does swell,
To hear this truth, which none can now dispel.
Embrace me now, and let our hearts unite;
For, in this bond, our future shall be bright!

AMPHION

Dear mother —lost, yet found in Fate's design—,
We knew you not, but now our hearts align.
Forgive our doubt, our harsh and errant ways;
For, in this truth, we find the light of days.

ZETHUS

Embrace us, mother, let the past be healed;
The wounds of time, in love, are now revealed.

No longer shall we doubt, nor live apart;
For, in your presence, beats a single heart.

ANTIOPE
My sons, my life, my every hope renewed.
In this embrace, the past is now subdued.
With joy and tears, our spirits intertwine,
In this reunion, blessed by the Divine.

DIRCE
What trickery is this? What tale is spun?
To claim these youths are yours, cannot be done!
Yet, in your eyes, a light begins to shine:
The truth unveiled; a lineage divine.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— Oh, gods above, bear witness to this day;
The bonds of blood, no force can rend away.
In love and truth, their heart shall find its home,
In Fate's embrace; no longer shall they roam.

ANTIOPE
Now, sons, with strength, our unity restore;
And, face the future, brighter than before.
Together, we shall stand against our foes
With hearts as one, where love and courage grows.

[Amphion and Zethus, enraged, decide to kill Dirce in the same manner she had previously threatened to kill Antiope: by tying her by her hair to the horns of a raging bull. Antiope disagrees, but in the end, she is forced to accept her sons' vengeful fury, unable to resist them.]

AMPHION
[*Embracing Antiope*:]
Dear mother, long-lost, now returned to me,
Our hearts as one, in love and harmony.
But what of Dirce, who would see you dead?
Her wrathful hand must now be firmly stayed.

ZETHUS
Brother, her wrath shall be repaid with wrath!
For, Dirce's cruelty shall feel our hand.
As she would harm our mother, so shall we
Deliver her to Fate, and set her free.

DIRCE
What madness speaks, what wild resolve is this?
You turn on me, for such a wretch as this?
The power you despise that I command,

By Thèbes' decree? You face a dire stand!

AMPHION

Your power, Dirce, holds no sway on truth;
For, Justice shall prevail in age and youth.
Your cruel intent shall now be met with force,
And vengeance take its due and rightful course.

ANTIOPE

Oh, sons, restrain this wrath, this vengeful fire!
For, in such acts, the soul does oft retire.
Forgiveness —not revenge— should be our way;
Let mercy guide us through this darkened day.

ZETHUS

Forgiveness, mother, had its time and place;
But, not for one who shows a heart so base!
Dirce shall pay for all her cruel deeds;
And, by her fate, our justice now proceeds.

[Amphion and Zethus grasp Dirce.]

DIRCE

Release me, fools, before the gods strike down
Your insolence, and tear apart this town!
The wrath of Thèbes shall fall upon your heads,
And all you love shall lie in shrouded beds!

AMPHION

Your threats are void, your power naught but air;
For, Justice meets its course, by your despair.
Prepare to meet your fate, as you have sown;
In bonds of vengeance, reap what you have grown!

ZETHUS

[T*o Dirce, tearing apart her bacchanal deerskin:*]
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope(?) / Antigone(?)*", fr. 175, 1-8]
*Abandon Thèbes, and flee from here with haste;
*And, we will spare your life from bitter waste.
*Else, fearsome bulls will drag you by your hair,
*And —in their mighty grip— your body tear.
*No longer wrapped in luxury's embrace,
*Nor shielded by great Heracles' strong hand,
*You will not roam through fields with birds, in grace
*—with company so bold and light of face!
*Your deerskin worn, in shame, shall be removed;

*For, Dionysus' rites you don't deserve!

DIRCE

[*To all*:]

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope(?) / Antigone(?)*", fr. 175, 9-15]

*I then embrace my fate, as gods ordain:
*To die, though noble, by a slave's disdain.
*A woman proud, now faced with this cruel test
*—by hands of one whose status is oppressed.
*For if, in such harsh trials, nobly-born
*Grow fierce and rash, they're always met with
* scorn.
*Though wretched and ill-fated I remain,
*My dignity intact, despite the pain.

ZETHUS

Come, brother, let us end this cruel strife,
And send this serpent to her rightful life.
For, by this act, our bond shall be restored,
And peace be sought —as Justice whets her sword.

[Amphion and Zethus exit the scene, dragging Dirce on the ground by her hair, in a frenzy to kill her. As they prepare to execute her, the Chorus of the Bacchants stays stunned and silent.]

Notes & Commentary:

Characters:

Dirce: Dirce's entrance marks the appearance of a significant antagonist. She is depicted as a figure of authority and cruelty, intent on maintaining the established order and her power. Her interactions reveal her belief in the divine justification for slavery and her ruthless nature.

Herdsman: The herdsman serves as a catalyst for the recognition scene. His revelation of the twins' true identities is crucial to the narrative, shifting the plot towards the climax.

Zethus and Amphion: The brothers are shown in a moment of moral conflict and of eventual unity. Their differing views on labor and freedom are highlighted once again, this time in direct opposition to Dirce's beliefs. The scene underscores their eventual acceptance of their true heritage and their mother's plight.

Antiope: Antiope's presence in this scene is passive at first, as she is discovered by the Bacchants and threatened by Dirce. However, her role becomes more active as the herdsman reveals the truth, leading to an emotional reunion with her sons.

Chorus of Bacchants: The Bacchants, as followers of Dionysus, add a layer of divine presence and fate. Their reactions to the unfolding events reflect the shock and astonishment of the audience.

Chorus of Athenian Men: This silent Chorus serves as a backdrop, emphasizing the gravity of the events and the broader societal implications.

Themes:

Justice vs. Vengeance: This scene vividly portrays the conflict between justice and vengeance. While Amphion and Zethus seek to avenge their mother's suffering, Antiope advocates for mercy. This theme is central to Greek tragedy, exploring the moral complexities of retribution.

Recognition and Identity: The revelation of Zethus and Amphion's true identities is a pivotal moment. The recognition scene, facilitated by the herdsman, brings to light their noble heritage and redefines their roles within the narrative.

Power and Oppression: Dirce represents the oppressive power structure that the protagonists must confront. Her belief in divine sanction for slavery contrasts sharply with the brothers' views on freedom and justice.

Divine Will and Mortal Action: The intervention of Dionysus, through the Bacchants and the herdsman's revelation, underscores the theme of divine will guiding mortal actions. The gods' influence is a constant presence, shaping the characters' fates.

Structure:

Dirce's Entrance and Dialogue: Dirce's arrival sets the stage for the conflict. Her conversation with the herdsman and the brothers reveals her authoritarian nature and sets up the moral and ideological clash.

Philosophical Debate: The debate between Zethus, Amphion, and Dirce mirrors the earlier "agon", but focuses on broader societal issues such as slavery, justice, and the role of the gods. This debate is rich in rhetoric and character development.

Discovery and Threat: The Bacchants' discovery of Antiope adds tension, leading to Dirce's threats and the brothers' moral dilemma. This part of the scene heightens the emotional stakes and builds suspense.

Recognition and Reunion: The herdsman's revelation and the ensuing recognition of Antiope by her sons is the emotional climax. This moment is filled with dramatic irony and pathos, as the truth reshapes the characters' relationships.

Vengeance and Resolution: The brothers' decision to execute Dirce and their ensuing actions bring the scene to a violent conclusion. This decision is contrasted with Antiope's pleas for mercy, highlighting the complexity of justice and retribution.

Symbolism:

The Lyre and Labor: The earlier debate about the lyre and labor is symbolically extended in this scene. Amphion's music represents harmony and higher ideals, while Zethus's labor tools symbolize strength and practical wisdom.

Chains and Freedom: Dirce's threats and the brothers' resolve to free their mother symbolize the struggle between oppression and liberation. The physical act of binding Dirce reflects the reversal of power and the triumph of justice.

Divine Intervention: The presence of the Bacchants and the influence of Dionysus underscore the theme of divine intervention. The gods' will is portrayed as both guiding and complicating mortal actions.

Foreshadowing:

Dirce's Fate: The brothers' decision to execute Dirce foreshadows the themes of retribution and justice that will continue to unfold. This act of vengeance sets the stage for the final resolution of the narrative.

Moral and Ethical Conflict: The tension between mercy and vengeance, highlighted by Antiope's pleas and the brothers' actions, foreshadows the ethical dilemmas that will be central to the narrative's resolution.

Cultural Commentary:

Slavery and Freedom: The debate about slavery and freedom reflects broader societal issues in ancient Greece. The characters' differing views highlight the complexities of power, justice, and human dignity.

Divine Justice: The intervention of Dionysus and the unfolding of fate reflect the Greek belief in divine justice. The characters' actions are portrayed as part of a larger cosmic order, influenced by the gods.

Conclusion:

The third scene deepens the narrative's complexity by introducing Dirce as a powerful antagonist and exploring the themes of justice, vengeance, and recognition. The philosophical debate between the characters enriches the plot, while the recognition scene provides an emotional climax. The interplay of divine and mortal actions continues to drive the story, setting the stage for the dramatic resolution.

3rd Choral Ode
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN, CHORUS OF BACCHANTS

[The Chorus of the Bacchants slowly exits the stage, lamenting Dirce's tragic end and vowing revenge from Dionysus for the murder.]

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— Oh, fearful sight, when Vengeance takes its course
And Justice wields its sharp, unyielding force.
May all who see remember this dark day,
Where love and hate in equal measure lay!

BACCHANTS' CHORUS

—— Oh, Bacchus, mighty lord of vine and song,
Your vengeance shall be swift, your justice strong!
For, those who dare to taint your sacred ground
Shall meet their end, in shadows dark, and bound!

—— With madness, they have turned the world askew;
But, you shall right the wrongs, with power true.
In frenzied night, your wrath shall be revealed;
And, those who sinned against you shall be kneeled.

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— Thus ends this part, where blood and tears entwine.
And, in this tragic course, the truth we find;
For, in the balance of the Scales, we see
The hand of Fate and our own destiny.

Notes & Commentary:

The 3rd Ode in this tragedy serves as a reflection on the themes of vengeance, justice, and the influence of the divine. It brings together the perspectives of both the Athenian Chorus and the Chorus of the Bacchants, by creating a dialogue which underscores the dramatic events and their significance.

Athenian Chorus:

The Athenian Chorus begins by lamenting the sight of Vengeance and the unyielding force of Justice (both of them artistically and symbolically personified), setting a somber tone. Their lines "*Oh, fearful sight, when Vengeance takes its course / And Justice wields its sharp, unyielding force.*" highlight the duality of Justice and Vengeance, suggesting that these forces, acting through Necessity («*Ἀνάγκη*» in the classical Greek perception of the Cosmos, which is absent in these verses), are often harsh and merciless. The Chorus reminds the audience of the moral complexities involved in the pursuit of justice and retribution,

emphasizing the tragic nature of the outcome of these events.

Bacchants' Chorus:

The Chorus of the Bacchants, on the other hand, invokes Bacchus (Dionysus) directly, calling for his vengeance and justice. Their lamentation over Dirce's death and their vow for revenge illustrate their deep loyalty to their god and their belief in his power to right the wrongs. The lines "*Your vengeance shall be swift, your justice strong!*" and "*In frenzied night, your wrath shall be revealed;*" emphasize the impending divine retribution, suggesting that the actions of the mortals have not gone unnoticed by the gods. This invocation serves to elevate the tension, foreshadowing the consequences that will follow.

Reflection and Unity of Themes:

Together, the Choruses reflect on the broader themes of the play: the interplay of love and hate, the inevitability of fate, and the relentless pursuit of justice. The Athenians' plea for wisdom and protection, "*May wisdom guide our steps through dark and light, / And may the gods protect us in our plight."* underscores the human desire for divine guidance and the hope for a just resolution amidst chaos.

The final lines provide a poignant summary of the scene, acknowledging the entanglement of emotions and the unfolding of truth. By referring to the balance of the Scales (of Divine Justice) and to the hand of Fate, this Ode encapsulates the central conflict of the tragedy: the struggle between human actions and divine will, and the search for justice in a world governed by both.

In essence, the 3rd Ode serves as a bridge between the action and the audience, offering a moment of reflection on the significant themes of the play. It emphasizes the tragic consequences of vengeance and the omnipresent influence of the gods, setting the stage for the subsequent unfolding of events.

4th Scene
MESSENGER (2nd HERDSMAN), ANTIOPE, AMPHION, ZETHUS, CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN, HERDSMAN

[A Messenger (a second herdsman from Mount Cithaeron) enters the stage to recount to Antiope, to the herdsman, and to the Chorus the manner of Dirce's death at the hands of Amphion and Zethus. Antiope, having maintained a stoic attitude towards the misfortunes that had befallen her for so many years, had refused to participate in Dirce's execution, leaving the task to her sons (being forced to accept it, though she had not sought it).]

MESSENGER

Oh, hear me now, you gathered souls; attend!
For, dark and dire news I now must bring.
On Cithaeron's low slopes, a tragic end
Dirce has met, by Fate's relentless swing.

With hands of wrath and hearts resolved in rage,
their grievous toll Amphion and Zethus took.
They bound her fast —their fury none could gauge—,
And led her to the bull with cruel control.

The beast, enraged, with fury in its eyes,
Did take her hence, and thundered through the glade.
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 221]
*With brutal force, her body met the stones
*And oaks, as it reshaped by savage blows.

Her screams did pierce the heavens; her demise
A grim reminder of the debts now paid.
Her form, once fair, was battered, bruised, and torn
—a testament of Vengeance and her thorn.

Her blood now stains the sacred earth below,
And mingles with the waters' steady flow.
Her cries, like echoes, through the valleys roll
—a mark of Justice on her tortured soul.

The beast, relentless, dragged her through the brush;
Her flesh against the jagged rocks was crushed.
With every blow, her body twisted, bent
—a sight of horror, anguish, and lament.

The trees did shake, the birds took flight in fear,
As Dirce's torment echoed far and near.
The sacred earth did drink her crimson flow,

While shadows danced upon her blood's red glow.

Her spirit, torn by cruel grasp, did wail
—like ghostly whisper, like a mournful gale.
The gods themselves must surely weep above
—to see such wrath disguised as vengeful love.

Oh, cruel Fate, that such an end should be
For one so proud, brought low by destiny.
Her tale, a lesson —carved in blood and pain—
Of how the gods' decree none can disdain.

Her bones unsheltered, for the beasts to tread
—a grim reminder of the blood she shed.
Her legacy, a story dark and grim
—of vengeance served upon the mountain's rim.

Thus, Dirce's end —a tale of sorrow deep—
Shall haunt the hearts of those who dare to weep.
Remember well the price that wrath can claim;
For, in her death, we see our own dark shame.

ATHENIAN CHORUS

[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 222]
*—— *They say that Dike is the child of Time*
*—a *force that seeks out wickedness and crime.*
**She reigns for Justice —Chronos' dear kin—,*
**And shows which hearts are pure, which steeped in sin.*

—— Thus, Dirce's end, a tale both dark and just;
Her blood, a tribute to this sacred trust.
In every deed, in every soul's dark plight,
The scales of Justice balance wrong and right.

ANTIOPE

[*With a stoic calmness*:]
Oh, sons of mine, the path you chose is wrought
With sorrow deep; yet, Justice has been sought.
My heart, though heavy, finds in truth its stay
—for, Dirce's hand no longer holds its sway.

[After the Messenger has completed the recounting, Amphion and Zethus enter the stage, having returned from killing Dirce —whose bloodied body they have thrown into a nearby spring, on the slopes of the hill near where Thèbes is built. Before leaving the stage, the Messenger warns everyone that Lycus is on his way to Eleutherae with his guards, having followed the tracks of Antiope. Subsequently, Antiope and her sons devise a plan to eliminate Lycus: they will set an ambush for him inside the cave, with the support of Amphion's Athenian friends (members of the Chorus).]

MESSENGER
But, hark; for, more ill tidings must I share:
Lycus approaches with his guards in tow.
Their purpose clear, to find and capture fair
Antíope, whose fate they seek to know.

Prepare yourselves; for, danger draws yet near;
And, Lycus' wrath is fierce as summer's flame.
The hour has come to cast aside your fear,
And face the threat that seeks to bring you shame.

ZETHUS
Oh, mother dear, and brother strong and true,
The time is now to act with cunning skill.
Within the cave, a trap we shall construe;
And, by our wits, our foe's dark blood shall spill.

AMPHION
Let us, indeed, with careful hands prepare
A snare for Lycus and his guards as well.
With Athenian aid, we'll set our lair
and, from this plot, a tale of triumph tell.

ANTIOPE
Though I abhor the path of blood and strife,
I see the need for cunning and for might;
For, Lycus seeks to end my precious life;
And, only strength can turn the coming night.

AMPHION
Then, let us to the cave, our plan devise:
With stones and shadows, set our deadly snare.
Our Athenian friends, with courage wise,
Shall aid us in this venture, if they dare.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— With hearts of iron and with spirits strong,
We stand beside you in this hour of need.
For, Justice calls; and, we shall right the wrong
—together with your kin, in word and deed.

[Antiope, Amphion, Zethus, and half the Chorus prepare to set the ambush in the cave.]

ZETHUS
Come, mother, to the cave's dark, hidden heart;
And, there within, we'll lay our cunning plan.
Our foes shall fall; and, thus, we'll play our part

In shaping Fate, as best as mortals can.

ANTIOPE
My sons, take heed; for, in this shadowed place
We lay our hopes, and trust in Fortune's grace.
Yet, do not let the darkness taint your soul;
For, in the end, 'tis virtue makes us whole.

AMPHION
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. A, col. I,
2-6, 11-16]
*—— *If Zeus our father truly is,*
**He'll save us and avenge our foe.*
**We cannot flee —even if we wished—,*
**as Dirce's blood demands its toll.*

**To You, who dwell in ether's light:*
**Do not for pleasure take a wife,*
**And then be useless to your kin;*
**Your loved ones aid, and guard their life!*

**And may we hunt successfully,*
**To trap this most ungodly man.*

[Antiope, Amphion, Zethus and half the Chorus start entering the cave.]

ANTIOPE
[*With resolve*:]
Into the cave, where shadows weave their spell,
We'll find the strength within, and bid farewell
To fears that haunt and doubts that cloud our way;
For, in our unity, we save the day!

AMPHION
With every step, we tread on unknown ground;
The echoes of our past in silence bound.
Yet, in this cave, our future shall be wrought;
And, by our deeds, the victory be sought.

ZETHUS
No turning back, the die is cast; we go
To meet our Fate and face the coming foe.
Together strong, we'll stand and fight as one,
Until the final victory is won.

HERDSMAN
Now rests upon my shoulders weighty trust,
To lead our foe into the cave's dark crust.

With careful words and guile, I'll play my part
And lure him hence, to where he'll meet his dart.

MESSENGER
Oh, heed the signs, the portents in the sky;
For, in this cave, the end of Lycus lies.
Yet, let us act with wisdom, not with pride;
For, in the gods' domain, our fates abide.

ANTIOPE
May all the gods watch over us this night,
And guide our hands with their celestial light;
For, in this hour, all courage we must show,
To end this strife and lay our sorrows low.

AMPHION
Then let us move, with hearts both strong and sure,
To face our fate with spirits clear and pure.
Together, we shall see this battle through,
And find the dawn with hopes renewed and true.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
(the part entering the cave)
—— *With every breath, we pledge our steadfast aid.*
In unity, our strength shall not be swayed.
For, Justice calls, and we shall answer true
—together strong, with hearts both brave and new.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
(the part outside of the cave)
[Based on Euripides' "*Antiope*", fr. 223.17-18]
*—— *Here he arrives —if I must guess—,*
**With tyrant's scepter, Lycus, no less.*
**Be still, dear friends, let silence reign;*
**For, now the tyrant walks this plain!*

[Antiope, Amphion, Zethus and half the Chorus exit into the cave, ready to face the approaching threat of Lycus and his guards. The scene ends with a sense of impending confrontation and the resolve to fight for justice and freedom.]

Notes & Commentary:

Characters:

Messenger (2nd Herdsman): The Messenger serves a crucial role in Greek tragedy, delivering news that drives the plot forward. His account of Dirce's death sets the tone for the scene, emphasizing the themes of justice and vengeance.

Antiope: Antiope's response to the Messenger's news showcases her stoic acceptance of fate. Her character remains resilient and composed despite the turmoil, reflecting the ancient Greek ideal of enduring suffering with dignity.

Amphion and Zethus: The brothers continue to evolve, showing both their fierce determination to protect their mother and their willingness to use cunning and strategy against Lycus. Their unity and strength are emphasized, highlighting their transition from conflict to collaboration.

Chorus of Athenian Men: The Chorus supports the protagonists and provides moral and emotional resonance to the unfolding events. Their readiness to aid in the ambush underscores the themes of solidarity and justice.

Herdsman: The herdsman's role in leading Lycus into the trap highlights his loyalty and the importance of strategy and cunning in the battle against tyranny.

Themes:

Justice and Vengeance: The scene explores the thin line between justice and vengeance. Dirce's brutal death, though seen as just retribution, also raises questions about the cycle of violence and its impact on the human soul.

Fate and Free Will: The characters' actions are driven by a sense of destiny and divine will, yet they also exercise their agency in planning and executing their strategy against Lycus. This interplay between fate and free will is central to Greek tragedy.

Family and Loyalty: The unity of Amphion, Zethus, and Antiope against a common enemy underscores the importance of family and loyalty. Their bond becomes a source of strength in their struggle.

Moral Ambiguity: The scene highlights the moral complexity of the characters' actions. While their cause is just, the methods they employ —deception and ambush— add layers of ethical ambiguity.

Structure:

The Messenger's Speech: The Messenger's vivid description of Dirce's death serves as both exposition and a means to heighten the dramatic tension. His recounting of the event is graphic and evocative, setting the stage for the upcoming conflict with Lycus.

Antiope's Reaction: Antiope's stoic response provides a counterpoint to the violence of Dirce's death. Her calm demeanor reinforces her strength and resilience, even as she acknowledges the necessity of her sons' actions.

Preparation for Ambush: The detailed planning of the ambush showcases the strategic minds of Amphion and Zethus. This segment builds suspense and demonstrates their growth from impulsive youth to cunning warriors.

Chorus Support: The Chorus's commitment to aiding in the ambush reinforces the theme of collective action and the pursuit of justice. Their presence adds moral weight to the protagonists' cause.

Symbolism:

Blood and Water: The mingling of Dirce's blood with the spring water symbolizes the purification of Thèbes through the removal of tyranny. Water often symbolizes cleansing, and in this context, it represents the city's rebirth through justice. The mingling of Dirce's blood with the spring water also symbolizes purification as well, as the cyclical nature of violence and retribution. It underscores the themes of justice and the consequences of cruelty.

The Cave: The cave serves as a symbolic space of transformation and confrontation. It is where Antiope's children were hidden and now becomes the site of their decisive stand against Lycus. The cave represents both a place of concealment and revelation.

Stones and Shadows: The use of stones and shadows in their plan symbolizes the blend of strength and cunning required to overcome their enemies. It reflects the need for both physical and intellectual prowess.

Historical and Mythological References:

Divine Intervention: Dionysus's earlier involvement and the ongoing influence of the gods underscore the belief in divine justice and retribution. The characters' actions are seen as part of a larger cosmic plan.

Foreshadowing:

Lycus's Approach: The Messenger's warning about Lycus's imminent arrival foreshadows the impending confrontation. This creates a sense of urgency and heightens the dramatic tension.

Moral Conflict: Antiope's plea for her sons to maintain their virtue despite the necessity of violence foreshadows the ongoing struggle between justice and vengeance. This moral conflict will continue to play a crucial role in the narrative.

Conclusion:

The fourth scene advances the plot by depicting the aftermath of Dirce's death and setting up the final confrontation with Lycus. The characters' preparations and the Messenger's news build suspense, while the themes of justice, family, and fate are further explored. The scene combines action, moral reflection, and strategic planning, highlighting the complexity of the protagonists' struggle. This blend of elements maintains the dramatic intensity and prepares the audience for the climactic events to follow.

4th Choral Ode
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— Oh, tale of sorrow, Vengeance, and of Fate,
Where hearts do clash and Justice cannot wait!
May wisdom guide our steps through dark and light,
And may the gods protect us in our plight.

—— Thus ends this part, where shadows hold their sway.
And, in the cave, the Fates align to play.
For, in this place, where light and dark contend,
The path of Justice finds its final bend.

Epode

—— Oh, Fate, you guide the hearts of men
to paths of darkness and of light,
in shadows deep and hidden glen!
Unfold the drama of this night!

Notes & Commentary:

The 4th Ode delves deeper into the themes of fate, justice, and the dichotomy between "*light*" and "*dark*" (merciful and vengeful actions, respectively). The Chorus reflects on the unfolding drama, acknowledging the complex interplay of forces which guide human actions and the inevitable clash between opposing elements. The invocation of Fate as both a guide and an obstacle underscores the tension between predestination and free will, a common theme in Greek tragedy.

The reference to "*shadows deep and hidden glen*" creates a vivid imagery of the uncertainty and mystery that shrouds the characters' journey. This setting is both literal and metaphorical, as the cave represents the unknown and the subconscious, where true intentions and truths are hidden and revealed; but it is also an actual cave, in which the main characters await Lycus, for revenge.

The plea for wisdom and for divine protection indicates the Chorus's understanding of the fragility of human endeavors against the backdrop of divine machinations. It also emphasizes the hope that the gods will ultimately guide them through the darkness towards justice.

This Ode adds depth to the Chorus's contemplation, by providing a pause for the audience to reflect on the themes before the final resolution. The concluding lines set the stage for the forthcoming resolution, highlighting the anticipation and the tension, as the characters approach their fateful confrontation. This prepares the audience for the culmination of the play's central conflicts and themes.

5th Scene

LYCUS, LYCUS'S GUARDS (silent), HERSDMAN, MESSENGER (silent), CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN, AMPHION, ZETHUS, ANTIOPE, HERMES, DIONYSUS

[Lycus arrives at Eleutherae, having followed Antiope's tracks along with his guards. At the entrance of the cave, he encounters the herdsman. He immediately demands to know who he is and if he has heard anything about Antiope or if he has seen any strange-looking woman lurking nearby. The herdsman, telling Lycus that he has seen a woman running to hide in the cave, manages to persuade Lycus and his guards to enter the cave, thus falling into the ambush. The initial dialogue between Lycus and the Herdsman has been reconstructed based on parts of fragment B, column I —with much poetic and dramaturgical liberty taken, due to its severe fragmentation.]

LYCUS

Where is the wretch who dares defy my will?
Show her to me, that I may seal her fate.
Her life is forfeit, by the gods' own will;
And, none shall hide her from my vengeful hate.

HERDSMAN

Great Lycus, welcome to our humble ground,
Where peace and simple joys do oft abound.
Yet, Fate has led you here, in quest of blood;
And thus, we stand in service to your mood.

LYCUS

Where hides she now? In this forsaken cave?
Who here conspires, or offers her their aid?
From what strange land do these intruders hail?
Show me the truth —and swiftly, be not stayed!

HERDSMAN

My lord, I take no pleasure in deceit,
Nor harbor evil thoughts against your might.
But, understand, this place is not secure;
For, dangers lurk, and shadows shroud the light.

LYCUS

You say this cave is not a place of rest?
That peril lies within these rocky walls?
Then action must be taken; now, prepare;
For, those who hide will meet their direful falls.

HERDSMAN

Indeed, my lord, there is much to be done;
The one you seek has died within these caves
—felled by the bandits who in shadows run;
And, now her lifeless form within them stays.

LYCUS
Then let us go and rid these caves of them,
And claim her lifeless body for our prize,
to bring it back to Thèbes —a trophy true—,
And show all men no might my will defies.

HERDSMAN
Then, let's go forth and enter in the cave.
Before, we dwelt in peace and quietude.
Permitting strangers here, was our mistake;
And now, we'll face this threat with fortitude!

LYCUS
How many strangers in this hidden den?
Do they bear arms, or lie in wait unarmed?
For now, we guard the cave with spear in hand;
And soon, these foes shall face the harm they've
charmed.

HERDSMAN
There is but one or two, without much might;
They do not hold strong weapons in their hands.
But still, with caution, we must now proceed,
And drive them out of here —our sacred lands.

LYCUS
Then, keep an eye on all the cave surrounds.
Let no one from within escape our sight.
Nycteus' daughter must be brought to me;
Her lifeless form I'll tie in chains, upright.

HERDSMAN
If willing be the gods, we'll soon prevail,
And peace shall once again embrace this house.
But come, my lord, and let us enter in!
[*Whispering, ironically*:]
For, Vengeance lurks, as silent as a mouse.

[Lycus and his guards follow the herdsman toward the cave. Inside the cave, Antiope, Amphion, and Zethus prepare for the ambush.]

ANTIOPE
Oh, sons, my heart does ache for what we do;
Yet, in this hour, no other path is clear.
May all the gods watch over us and you,
And guide our hands, so Justice may appear.

AMPHION

Fear not, dear mother; for, the gods are just;
And, in their wisdom, guide our every deed.
Our cause is right; and, in their might, we trust
That from this snare our foes shall not be freed.

ZETHUS

Let silence reign; for, now our prey draws near;
And, with the dawn, his blood shall stain the ground.
Prepare your hearts, and cast away your fear;
For, victory within our grasp is found.

[The herdsman leads Lycus and his guards into the cave. The latter step forward, entering the trap set by Amphion and Zethus.]

LYCUS

Traitorous fiends, who dared to take her life,
And hide Antíope's remains in shame!
Come forth, and face the justice you have earned;
For, none shall save you from approaching bane.

AMPHION

[*Leaping from the shadows, and disarming Lycus*:]
Now, Lycus, face the justice of the gods;
For, you will meet the end your deeds demand.
By toil and peril, by all-sacred odds,
Your reign of terror now shall end, in blood.

ZETHUS

[*Joining his brother, and grasping Lycus*:]
For mother's pain and all your cruel misdeeds,
We'll strike you down and end your vicious reign.
The price of tyranny your heart will bleed;
And, by our hands, you shall be justly slain.

LYCUS

What madness dares to turn my fate to doom?
You sons of wrath, do you know whom you'll strike?
This treachery shall bring the darkest gloom:
Upon your heads, the gods shall bring the pike.

AMPHION

No Madness strikes, but Justice long delayed
—for years you did inflict of suffering.
Our mother's tears shall now be fully paid;

And, by our hands, your death shall now be writ.

It was your wife, Dirce, who did oppress,
With cruelty unbound, her every breath.
We took her life —her blood a harsh redress;
For all the pain she dealt, we gave her death.

ZETHUS [his sword over Lycus' head]
No words; for, action truly must now speak.
The time for Justice is at hand, so near.
In shadows deep, your soul shall find its peak;
And, from this life, you shall now disappear!

Your Dirce met her end, by righteous wrath:
We bound her hair to bull's wild, frenzied horns.
Her screams were drowned within the bloodied path;
For, she was source of endless, cruel scorns.

LYCUS
[*Desperate and broken*:]
What horrors have you wrought upon my kin?
My heart now shatters —grief, beyond all bounds—,
To hear my Dirce's slain, her blood runs thin!
My soul, in anguish deep; no solace found!

Her laughter bright, her eyes that shone with fire,
Now lost forever —taken by your hand!
Oh, how I mourn my fate within this mire
—to join her shade in Hade's shadowland!

Oh, wretched fate, to lose her to the night!
And now my life, to follow in her wake.
More I lament her death or this dark plight
—that drags me too to Hades' realm, opaque?

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— Oh, spirits high, and Vengeance sought!
In darkness, Justice finds its way.
Through deeds of right and battles fought,
The gods above do watch and sway.

[The Athenians have immobilized the guards.]

HERDSMAN
Hold fast, you warriors of the night;
For, Lycus' fate is sealed in stone.
His guards lie vanquished, cannot fight;

And, soon, his soul shall be alone.

[Lycus —realizing his predicament— attempts to flee, but is overpowered by Amphion and Zethus. The brothers drag Lycus towards the depths of the cave.]

LYCUS

—— Mercy, I beg; for, life is dear!
Though deeds were dark, I now repent.
Release me from this fate so drear;
I swear, my ways I will amend!

AMPHION

—— No mercy for a heart so black;
For, in your deeds, no pity found.
The gods decree, and we'll attack.
Your fate is sealed beneath this ground.

ZETHUS

—— In shadows deep, your final breath
Shall mark the end of tyranny.
For, Justice leads you now to death;
And, from this life, your soul shall flee.

[Enter Hermes in the theologeion of the stage.]

HERMES

—— Hold, sons of Thèbes, your wrath restrain!
For, Justice tempered by the gods
Must not be marred by mortal stain
—nor vengeance blind by darkened odds.

By Zeus's will, I come to you,
To halt this tide of blood and hate.
For, in your hands, a power true
—to rule and guide the city's fate.

You brothers strong, now kings decree
—to lead this land with wisdom's light.
In harmony, let Thèbes be free,
And steer her clear from endless night.

ZETHUS

—— Great Hermes, messenger divine,
What word do you from Zeus convey?
Injustice marked; and vengeance mine
Shall now be stayed, if you do say.

HERMES

[*To Amphion and Zethus*:]
—— Amphion, Zethus, hear my voice:
You shall be kings of Theban land,
Until the heir of age; rejoice,
And take the throne by fated hand!

Know too, that Zeus has sired you both;
His lineage, your noble birth.
Now, build a city by your oath,
With seven gates to guard its worth.

Near Ismenus, do let it rise
—a fortress strong, to touch the skies.
Amphion, with your lyre's sweet sound,
You shall lift rocks from earthly ground.

Zethus, a Theban bride awaits
—to share your throne and weave your fate.
And, Amphion, too, from Phrygia's gates,
Tantalus' daughter seals your state.

Construct with care, with love and might
This city strong, against the night.
Your future's bright, though shadows play;
Together, you shall light the way.

Yet, heed my words: a specter lies
Upon this throne, from ages past.
The curse of Cadmus never dies;
Its haunting grip, it holds so fast.

For, by the veins of Cadmus' blood,
A darkness lurks —a fated doom.
Beware the tides of sorrow's flood,
And guard your hearts from future gloom.

[*To Lycus*:]
—— Lycus, henceforth, in exile dwell;
For deeds unjust, your fate is sealed.
Place upon pyre your wife's remains;
her charred bones cast on Ares' spring
—thus "Dirce" named; her mournful name
through verdant Theban plains shall ring.

LYCUS

—— Oh, Fortune, how you twist and turn!
A moment spared, yet heart does yearn.
My life preserved, but cast away;

From Thèbes' embrace, I must now stray!

Relief and sorrow blend, as one;
For, though I live, my throne is gone.
Exiled from the land I ruled,
By Fates divine —my power cooled.

Oh, Thèbes, my city, lost to me
—in foreign lands, my fate to see.
Though breath remains, my heart does break
—for, home and crown I must forsake.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— Oh, Justice tempered by the gods!
In wisdom, mercy finds its place!
And, in the hands of Fate's own rods,
The path of right we all embrace.

[Hermes exits. Enter Dionysus in the theologeion, lamenting the tragic death of his beloved Dirce.]

DIONYSUS
—— Oh, Dirce dear, your life's now spent
By hands of those who sought their due.
In sacred spring, your blood is lent;
And thus, I honor you anew.

This stream shall bear your name so bright
—in memory of faithful deeds.
For, in your death I find the light
To spread my worship, as it needs.

Your fervent zeal, your loyal heart,
did aid my cause, from very start;
Through rites and revels, wild and free,
You made all Greeks to worship me.

In fields and groves, where my name spread,
Your hand did guide, your voice had led.
With ivy crowned and thyrsus high,
Your faith ensured my cult would thrive.

In grief I stand, though godly might
—for, even gods do mourn the night.
Yet, dignity must hold its sway
—as, tears of gods in shadows lay.

[*To Antiope*:]
For justice wrought your sons did strive;
Yet, sorrow now must stay alive.

In Dirce's name, the stream shall flow
—her legacy through ages grow.

For Dirce's end, Antíope,
You too shall suffer, by my will.
Though sons protest in your defense,
The gods' decrees your fate fulfill.

Divine reprisal must be met;
For, blood was shed —a heavy debt.
Your sons' dark deed shall not go free;
Their hands are stained by Fate's decree.

So, let this be a lesson learned,
For those who seek where Fate is turned.
The gods above do watch and guide,
In shadows deep, where truths abide.

ANTIOPE

[*Cry, from within the cave*:]
—— Oh, cruel Fate, what have I done
To warrant such a harsh decree?
A mother spent, a hunted one,
In agony, I cease to be!

My sons, my heart, my every breath,
Must bear the weight of gods' demand.
In sorrow's grip, I face my death
—while shadows claim my broken hand.

Dionysus, oh, hear my plea
For mercy's touch upon my brow
—in madness deep, I beg of thee!
The path of life I forsake now!

Oh, sons of mine —in duty bound—,
Abide now by this divine will.
Through justice false —in shadows found—,
Your mother's cries shall haunt you still.

In Frenzy's realm I shall descend
—my soul consumed by endless night.
Yet, may my heart, in time, amend
—and find, in dark, the strength to fight.

Oh, gods above, my future's sealed:
In Madness, shadows take their toll.
My mind undone, my fate revealed:

In sorrow's depths, I lose my soul!

[Lost and frenzied, exits and leaves the cave.]

AMPHION
—— Oh, Dionysus, spare her plight;
For, in our hearts, we bear the blame.
Her suffering does not seem right,
When we have acted in her name.

ZETHUS
—— Our deeds were ours, and we shall stand.
For mother's fate, we take the cost.
In justice served by our own hand,
Let not her soul be now lost!

DIONYSUS
—— The gods have spoken, Fate is clear!
In acts divine, none may dissent.
For Thèbes, a future bright draws near;
But curses past, we must lament.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— The wheel of Fate now turns anew,
As Justice claims its rightful due!
The gods have spoken, clear and bright
—their will enforced by mortal might!

[All, except the Chorus, exit the stage.]

Notes & Commentary:

Small, additional parts of fragment C, column I of Euripides' "*Antiope*" have been used in the new dramaturgy, in the parts where Amphion and Zethus disclose to Lycus the death of his wife.

A substantial number of Euripides' verses which are preserved in Fragment B. col. I (about 32) have not been used exactly as they appear, in favor of subtly differentiated dramaturgy. In these verses, Hermes introduces himself as the son of Maia; he then demands from Lycus to cast the charred bones of Dirce into Ares' spring. However, no exile of Lycus is being mentioned; instead, Hermes, conveying Zeus' commands, simply hands the throne of Thèbes from Lycus over to Amphion and to Zethus, as he verifies that they are indeed Zeus's sons. He then commands the two brothers to build a city with seven-gated walls, by the "*Ismenus*" river, and also instructs Amphion how to play his lyre —so that the rocks can lift up in the air, thus facilitating the building of the city's walls. Finally, addressing the two brothers, he lets them know that Zethus is to be married to a Theban girl, while Amphion to a Phrygian princess —daughter of Tantalus. The additional appearance of Dionysus, as well as the divine frenzy inflicted upon Antiope, are my own dramaturgy —which aims to add to the dramaturgical depth; this last event is mentioned as such on other

ancient sources which describe the myth of Antiope, like in Pausanias' "*Description of Greece*" («*Βοιωτικά*»), 9.17.6.

The verses 808-855 have been reconstructed based on a rather free interpretation of a possible dramaturgy which may be implied in the surviving:
• Fragment A, col. I, lines 19-23
• Fragment B, col. I, lines 28-43
• Fragment C, col I, lines 44-45
of Euripides' "*Antiope*".

Verse 933 - "*Justice tempered by the gods*":
"*Justice tempered by the gods*" signifies a divine moderation of justice, where retribution and punishment are balanced by a higher, divine wisdom. It implies that human justice should align with the gods' sense of fairness, avoiding excessive or blind vengeance. This concept reflects a divine intervention which ensures that justice is meted out in a balanced and morally sound manner, thus preventing mortal impulses from corrupting the process.

In the context of "*aftodikía*" («*αὐτοδικία*» = self-help or private revenge) of the pre-Homeric era, this phrase contrasts the ancient practice where individuals had the right to exact personal vengeance or justice. "*Aftodikía*" was prevalent in a time when formal legal systems were either nascent or nonexistent, and personal retribution was a means to resolve conflicts. Individuals or families would often take justice into their own hands, leading to cycles of vendetta and blood feuds.

By the time of classical Athens, when this play was written, the concept of "*aftodikia*" had largely been replaced by established legal systems. The city-state had formal laws and judicial processes, in order to handle disputes and to administer justice, thus reflecting a shift towards communal regulation of justice and away from personal retribution.

In summary, "*Justice tempered by the gods*" underscores the importance of divine guidance in ensuring fair and balanced justice, contrasting with the pre-Homeric practice of "*aftodikía*" and reflecting the more structured legal systems of classical Athens.

This phrase also carries an inspiration from Shakespeare's language, evoking the poetic and elevated style typical of his works. Shakespeare often explored themes of justice and vengeance, emphasizing the importance of mercy and the dangers of excessive retribution. Similarly, this line highlights the need for justice to be guided by higher principles, ensuring that it serves the greater good rather than personal vendettas.

Characters:

Lycus: Lycus arrives with a determination to find and punish Antiope, showcasing his vengeful and tyrannical nature. His interaction with the Herdsman and subsequent confrontation with Amphion and Zethus reveal his desperation and eventual vulnerability. His lament for Dirce and plea for mercy highlight a complex character who oscillates between cruelty and pathos.

Herdsman: The Herdsman plays a critical role in luring Lycus into the ambush, demonstrating loyalty and cunning. His dialogue reflects his strategic thinking and deep understanding of the stakes involved.

Amphion and Zethus: The brothers exhibit a mix of strategic cunning and fierce determination.

Their dialogue underscores their commitment to justice and their willingness to take drastic measures to protect their mother and avenge past wrongs. The revelation of their plans and the ambush highlight their growth from mere youths to determined warriors.

Antiope: Antiope's role in this scene is one of both strength and resignation. She supports her sons' actions while grappling with the moral complexities of their choices. Her dialogue emphasizes her inner conflict and maternal love, providing a stark contrast to the violence around her. Additionally, her punishment by Dionysus for Dirce's death, despite her lack of participation in the execution, underscores the harsh and often arbitrary nature of divine retribution in Greek mythology.

Hermes: Hermes's intervention introduces a divine perspective, reinforcing the themes of justice and fate. His decree balances mercy with justice and foreshadows the ongoing curse of Cadmus, adding a layer of divine inevitability to the narrative.

Dionysus: Dionysus's lament for Dirce provides a divine reaction to the human events, emphasizing the importance of Dirce's role in his worship. His dialogue underscores the interplay between divine will and human actions, and his judgment on Antiope adds a tragic dimension to her fate.

Chorus of Athenian Men: The Chorus offers a moral and philosophical commentary on the events, reinforcing the themes of justice, fate, and divine intervention. Their presence adds a communal perspective to the individual struggles depicted on stage.

Themes:

Justice and Vengeance: The scene explores the blurred lines between justice and vengeance. The execution of Dirce and the planned ambush of Lycus are portrayed as acts of justice, yet they are driven by a desire for revenge, raising questions about the morality of such actions. This reflects the ancient concept of "*aftodikía*" («*αὐτοδικία*» = self-help or private revenge) in pre-Homeric Greece, where individuals often took the law into their own hands to avenge wrongs. This practice, while seen as a form of justice, often led to cycles of violence and retribution, highlighting the complex interplay between personal vendetta and communal law.

Divine Intervention: The interventions of Hermes and Dionysus highlight the role of the gods in human affairs. Their decrees and lamentations underscore the notion that mortal actions are often guided by or subject to divine will.

Fate and Free Will: The characters' actions are depicted as both determined by fate and driven by their own choices. The interplay between fate and free will is a central theme, with Hermes's and Dionysus's pronouncements reinforcing the idea that human lives are deeply intertwined with the divine.

Family and Loyalty: The bonds of family and loyalty are tested and reinforced throughout the scene. The unity and determination of Amphion and Zethus in protecting their mother contrast with the betrayal and cruelty of Lycus.

Moral Ambiguity: The moral complexity of the characters' actions is a key theme. While their cause is portrayed as just, the methods they employ —ambush, deception, and execution— add layers of ethical ambiguity, challenging the audience to consider the costs of justice and revenge.

Punishment and Divine Retribution: The punishment of Antiope by Dionysus, despite her not

participating in Dirce's execution, reflects the harshness of divine retribution in Greek mythology. It highlights the gods' ability to enact punishment not only for direct actions but also for associated guilt, reinforcing the idea that mortals are often subject to the whims of the gods.

Structure:

Lycus's Arrival: The arrival of Lycus and his interaction with the Herdsman sets up the central conflict of the scene. This segment builds suspense and establishes the stakes involved.

Preparation for Ambush: The planning and execution of the ambush highlight the strategic thinking and unity of Amphion and Zethus. This segment showcases their growth and determination, setting the stage for the confrontation.

Confrontation and Revelation: The confrontation between Lycus and the brothers, along with the revelation of Dirce's fate, provides the emotional and dramatic climax of the scene. Lycus's reactions and pleas for mercy add depth to his character.

Divine Intervention: Hermes's and Dionysus's interventions add a layer of divine complexity to the narrative. Their pronouncements and lamentations provide a broader perspective on the events and foreshadow future consequences.

Resolution and Foreshadowing: The scene concludes with a sense of resolution and foreshadowing. The ambush is successful, but the ongoing curse of Cadmus and the divine judgments indicate that the story is far from over, adding a sense of anticipation for the audience.

Symbolism:

The Cave: The cave serves as a symbol of both entrapment and revelation. It is a place where secrets are uncovered, and where the final confrontation with Lycus takes place, representing the convergence of past and present.

Divine Messengers: Hermes and Dionysus symbolize the intervention of higher powers in human affairs. Their presence and pronouncements emphasize the idea that mortal actions are subject to divine judgment and influence.

Conclusion:

The 5th scene is a pivotal moment in the tragedy, combining action, divine intervention, and moral reflection. The successful ambush of Lycus, the divine pronouncements, and the emotional depth of the characters' responses create a rich and complex narrative. The themes of justice, fate, and family loyalty are explored in depth, while the moral ambiguities of the characters' actions add layers of complexity. This scene effectively sets the stage for the final resolution of the tragedy, maintaining dramatic intensity and thematic richness.

Chorus' Exit Ode
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN MEN, AMPHION

[The setting is moved to the "*Cadmía*" —the acropolis of the city which was until this point named "*Enhilia*" («*Ἐνχιλία*»); having been founded by the mythical Cadmus, who had then built a rudimentary stone fortress around it. The Chorus sings the "*epimyth*", while Amphion plays his lyre. Large rocks, enchanted by the lyre's music, rise into the air by themselves, building the legendary seven-gated walls of the acropolis of the re-founded city, which, from now on, will be known by the name "*Thèbes*".]

ATHENIAN CHORUS

—— City of Thèbes, of ancient lore,
Where Cadmus laid foundation stone,
Now rise anew, in gods' galore!
By Amphion's song, your strength is shown.

—— With lyre's sweet notes, the rocks ascend;
In harmony, they all take flight.
Seven gates to guard and defend
—against the dark, to bring the light.

—— Your future's bright, with justice clear;
The sons of Thèbes shall reign in peace.
No tyrant's rule, no hand of fear!
For, wisdom's guide shall never cease.

—— Oh, blessed Thèbes, your glory stands
In odes and chants, in hearts of men.
With Amphion's lyre and guiding hands,
Your legacy shall rise again.

[The Chorus exits the stage with slow, deliberate steps. Amphion remains, continuing to play his lyre. The rocks rise and fit into place, helping the builders to construct the seven-gated walls of Thèbes.]

AMPHION

—— With every chord, the stones take flight,
To build a city strong and bright.
Oh, Thèbes, may peace within you reign,
And never face dark strife again.

In every wall, in every gate,
The hopes of Thèbes shall resonate.
A future forged by song and might,
Where Justice shines with purest light.

For, in these walls, our legacy
—a testament to harmony,
With lyre's song and hearts so true—,

Beloved Thèbes, we now renew.

ATHENIAN CHORUS
—— Thus, ends the tale of sorrow's depth;
And, in the balance, Justice sways.
For, in the hands of Fate, adept
The future holds our brightest days.

—— May wisdom guide our hearts and minds,
And lead us through the darkest night.
For, in the path that Justice finds,
We walk in truth and find the light.

[Amphion continues to play his lyre as the walls rise, forming the magnificent acropolis of Thèbes. The scene fades to a close with Amphion standing alone, his music filling the air.]

END OF PLAY

Notes & Commentary:

The name "*Enhilia*" («*Ἐνχιλία*»), as the previous name of "*Thèbes*" (that is, the name given to the city by Cadmus) is only referenced by Joannes Malalas, in his "*Chronographia*". There is no knowing where this source of this information may have come from, and it cannot be cross-checked by other historical sources, either more ancient, contemporary or newer than his work.

Characters:

Chorus of Athenian Men: The Chorus serves as the collective voice of reason, wisdom, and reflection, providing a philosophical and moral commentary on the events that have transpired. Their role in this scene is to celebrate the rebirth of Thèbes and to reinforce the themes of justice, of peace, and of the enduring legacy of the city.

Amphion: Amphion embodies the harmonious union of art and strength. His music, which has the power to move stones, symbolizes the transformative power of art and culture in building and protecting a just society. His role as a musician and a builder highlights the importance of balance between intellectual pursuits and practical achievements.

Themes:

Rebirth and Renewal: The construction of the seven-gated walls of Thèbes symbolizes the city's rebirth and renewal. After a period of turmoil and strife, Thèbes is being rebuilt on foundations of justice and harmony, signifying a hopeful future.

The Power of Art: Amphion's lyre, which enchants the rocks to rise and build the walls, represents the power of art to inspire and effect real change. This theme underscores the idea that culture and creativity are integral to the foundation and to the defense of a society.

Justice and Peace: The Chorus emphasizes that the future of Thèbes is to be guided by justice and peace. The rejection of tyranny and the embrace of wisdom suggest that the city's prosperity depends on fair and enlightened leadership.

Legacy and Memory: The song and the construction of the walls serve as a testament to Thèbes' enduring legacy. The idea that the city's story will be told "*in odes and chants, in hearts of men*" highlights the importance of preserving memory and history as a way to guide future generations.

Structure:

Opening Choral Ode: The Chorus opens the scene with a hymn to Thèbes, praising its legendary origins and celebrating its renewal. The imagery of the rocks ascending to the music of Amphion's lyre sets a mystical and uplifting tone.

Amphion's Solo: Amphion's solo performance continues the theme of renewal, as he sings of peace and justice while the rocks magically rise, to form the city's walls. His verses emphasize the harmony between music and architecture, culture and strength.

Closing Choral Ode: The Chorus concludes with a reflection on the themes of justice and wisdom. They express hope for the future and acknowledge the role of fate and divine guidance in shaping Thèbes' destiny.

Symbolism:

The Lyre: Amphion's lyre symbolizes the harmonizing power of art. It represents the idea that beauty and culture can inspire great achievements and contribute to the construction of a just and harmonious society.

Rising Rocks: The rocks rising and fitting into place to form the walls of Thèbes symbolize the power of unity and collective effort. They also represent the idea that even the most challenging tasks can be accomplished through harmony and cooperation.

Seven Gates: The seven gates of Thèbes are a symbol of completeness and protection. They represent the city's readiness to defend itself against external threats while maintaining internal harmony.

Conclusion:

The Exit Ode serves as a powerful and uplifting conclusion to the tragedy. It celebrates the themes of renewal, justice, and the transformative power of art and culture. The harmonious construction of Thèbes' walls by Amphion's lyre underscores the importance of balance between intellectual and practical pursuits. The Chorus's reflections provide a moral framework for understanding the events of the play, and offer a hopeful vision for the future. This scene effectively ties together the various themes of the tragedy and leaves the audience with a sense of resolution and optimism.

“*Antiope*” as a rock opera

The timeless allure of ancient Greek literature has always fascinated me, with its intricate tales of heroism, tragedy, and profound philosophical reflections. My journey into the depths of these ancient narratives, particularly with my previous works like the adaptation of "*Bellerophon*" and the metrical translation of Euripides' "*Bacchae*", has continually inspired me to explore innovative ways to bridge the classical past with the dynamic present. The fragmented play of Euripides' "*Antiope*" offered a rich tapestry of themes —love, betrayal, and the quest for identity— that resonated deeply with contemporary issues. It was this potent blend of timeless human experiences that spurred me to reimagine "*Antiope*" not just as a literary adaptation but also as a full-fledged rock opera.

The decision to bring "*Antiope*" partially to life as a rock opera was born out of a desire to make ancient drama accessible and engaging to a modern audience. By infusing the narrative with the raw energy and emotional intensity of rock music and symphonic rock and metal, combined with the grandeur and expressive power of traditional opera and choral elements, and with the help of AI, I aimed to create a visceral, immersive experience. This innovative approach allows listeners to connect with the ancient story on a deeply emotional level, while the contemporary musical style bridges the temporal gap, making the ancient themes of struggle, destiny, and redemption more relatable. The fusion of these elements democratizes access to this rich cultural heritage, inviting a new generation to explore and to appreciate the enduring legacy of classical Greek literature.

This is an ongoing process, and you may access this content on my personal SoundCloud account: https://soundcloud.com/chris-t-331652374

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About the author

With a passion for ancient Greek literature, Chris is exploring the intricate realms of ancient lyric poetry, ancient drama, philosophy, historiography and linguistics. Some of his other influences include the French operatic works of the 17th - 18th century, Shakespeare, Victorian poetry, the French symbolism movement and its influence on modern Greek poetry, Greek poets such as Lorentzos Mavilis, Kostis Palamas, Konstantinos Hatzopoulos & Angelos Sikelianos, and translators of classical works such as Thrasyvoulos Stavrou & Ioannis Gryparis.

He has first published «*Βελλεροφόντης*» ("*Bellerophon*"), as an adaptation of the work with the same title by N. J. Spyropoulos. With this lyrical theatre drama, written in Modern Greek verse, Tsirkas attempts to breathe new life into the ancient myth of Bellerophon, with his poetic skills and his understanding of the tragic.

Further adding to his literary repertoire, Tsirkas has tackled the timeless work of Euripides with his edition of «*Βάκχες*» ("*Bacchae*"). In this endeavor, he presents the original text with a side-by-side metrical translation and a commentary & analysis in Modern Greek. This contribution reflects his commitment in trying to make classical works accessible and engaging for contemporary readers of a broader audience.

In the tragic domain, Tsirkas has ventured into the realm of «*Μέδουσα*» ("*Medusa*"). This attempted reconstruction of a classical Attic tragedy, in classical Attic verse, bears the imprint of his deep appreciation for ancient dramatic traditions. With a translation and commentary in Modern Greek, he invites readers to explore the nuances of his tragic narrative.

Adding to his growing body of work, Chris has now turned his attention to the classical myth of «*Ἀντιόπη*» ("*Antiope*"). This new adaptation, written in English verse, seeks to capture the essence of Euripides' fragmented play, weaving together the scattered pieces with precision and poetic sensitivity. Through meticulous research and creative interpretation, Tsirkas breathes new life into the myth of Antiope, offering a fresh perspective on her tragic story. His version of "*Antiope*" includes a detailed commentary and analysis, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the ancient text and of its timeless, enduring themes. This latest work stands as a testament to his dedication in preserving and revitalizing classical Greek literature for modern audiences.

In addition to his work on classical literature, Chris is experimenting with modern genres such as symphonic metal, exploring how these contemporary styles can interact with and reflect the reception of Attic tragedy. Utilizing artificial intelligence, he creates innovative tracks that blend the dramatic intensity of ancient Greek theatre with the powerful, evocative sounds of symphonic metal and other, modern music genres. This fusion of old and new not only brings a fresh dimension to his creative endeavors but also aims to connect the rich traditions of the past with the dynamic expressions of modern music.

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